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MORE TALES BY POLISH AUTHORS

TALES BY POLISH AUTHORS. Translated by ELSE BENECKE. Crown 8vo., cloth, 3s. 6d. net.

"This is a book to be bought and read; it cannot fail to be remembered. . . . The whole book is full of passionate genius. . . . It is delightfully translated."—*The Contemporary Review*.

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MORE TALES BY POLISH AUTHORS

TRANSLATED BY

ELSE C. M. BENECKE

AND

MARIE BUSCH

NEW YORK
LONGMANS, GREEN & CO.
FOURTH AVENUE AND 30TH STREET
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NOTE

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POLISH PRONUNCIATION

cz = English *ch.*
sz = ,, *sh.*
ł = ,, *w*
ó = ,, *o* in " who."
ą = French " on."
ę = ,, *in* as in " vin."
rz and ż = ,, *j* in " jour."
(rz and ż after *k, p, t, ch* = English *sh.*)
ch = Scotch *ch* in " loch."
c = *ts.*

Pan = Mr.
Pani = Mrs.
Panna = Miss.

MACIEJ THE MAZUR

By ADAM SZYMANSKI

After leaving Yakutsk I settled in X——, a miserable little town farther up the Lena. The river is neither so cold nor so broad here, but wilder and gloomier. Although the district is some thousands of versts nearer the civilized world, it contains few colonies. The country is rocky and mountainous, and the taiga[1] spreads over it in all directions for hundreds and thousands of versts. It would certainly be difficult to find a wilder or gloomier landscape in any part of the world than the vast tract watered by the Lena in its upper course, almost as far as Yakutsk itself. Taiga, gloomy, wild, and inaccessible, taiga as dense as a wall, covers everything here—mountains, ravines, plains, and caverns. Only here and there a grey, rocky cliff, resembling the ruin of a huge monument, rises against this dark background; now and then a vulture circles majestically over the limitless wilderness, or its sole inhabitant, an angry bear, is heard growling.

The few settlements to be found nestle along

[1] Primeval forest.

the rocky banks of the Lena, which is the only highway in this as in all parts of the Yakutsk district. Continual intercourse with Nature in her wildest moods has made the people who live in these settlements so primitive that they are known to the ploughmen in the broad valleys along the Upper Lena, and to the Yakutsk shepherds, as "the Wolves."

The climate is very severe here, and, although the frosts are not as sharp and continuous as in Yakutsk, this country, on account of being the nearest to the Arctic regions, is exposed to the cruel Yakutsk north wind. This is so violent that it even sweeps across to the distant Ural Mountains.

At the influx of the great tributary of the Lena there is a large basin; it was formed by the common agency of the two rivers, and subsequently filled up with mud. This basin is surrounded on every side by fairly high mountains, at times undulating, at times steep. Its north-eastern outlet is enclosed by a very high and rocky range, through which both rivers have made deep ravines. X——, the capital of the district inhabited by the "Wolf-people," lies in this north-eastern corner of the basin, partly on a small low rock now separated from the main chain by the bed of the Lena, partly at the foot of the rock between the two rivers. The high range of mountains forming the opposite bank of the Lena rises into

an enormous rocky promontory almost facing the town. Flat at the top and overgrown by a wood, the side towards the town stands up at a distance of several hundred feet as a perpendicular wall planed smooth with ice, thus narrowing the horizon still more. As though to increase the wildness of the scenery presented by the mountains and rocks surrounding the dark taiga, a fiendish kind of music is daily provided by the furious gales—chiefly north—which prevail here continually, and bring the early night frosts in summer, and ceaseless Yakutsk frosts and snowstorms in winter. The gale, caught by the hills and resounding from the rocks, repeats its varied echoes within the taiga, and fills the whole place with such howling and moaning that it would be easy for you to think you had come by mistake into the hunting-ground of wolves or bears.

It was somewhere about the middle of November, a month to Christmas. The gale was howling in a variety of voices, as usual, driving forward clouds of dry snow and whirling them round in its mad dance. No one would have turned a dog into the street. The "Wolf-people" hid themselves in their houses, drinking large quantities of hot tea in which they soaked barley or rye bread, while the real wolves provided the accompaniment to the truly wolfish howling of the gale. I waited for an hour to see if it would abate;

however, as this was not the case, I set out from the house, though unwillingly.

I had promised Stanisław Światełki some days beforehand that I would go to him one day in the course of the week to write his home letters for him—" very important letters," as he said. It was now Saturday, so I could postpone it no longer. Stanisław was lame, and, on account of both his lameness and his calling, he rarely left the house. He came from the district of Cracow —from Wiślica, as far as I recollect—and prided himself on belonging to one of the oldest burgher families of the Old Town, a family which, as far as fathers' and grandfathers' memories could reach, had applied itself to the noble art of shoemaking. Stanisław, therefore, was also a shoemaker, the last in his family; for although the family did not become extinct in him, nevertheless, as he himself expressed it, " Divine Providence had ordained " that he should not hand down his trade to his son.

" God has brought him up, sir, and it seems to have been His will that the shoemaker Światełkis should come to an end in me," Stanisław used to say. He had a habit of talking quickly, as if he were rattling peas on to a wall. Only at very rare moments, when something gave him courage and no strangers were present, he would add: " Though His judgments are past finding out. . . . What does it matter ? Why, my grandson will

be a shoemaker!" He would then grow pale from having expressed his secret thought, turn round quickly, as though looking for something, shift uneasily, and—as I noticed sometimes—unconsciously spit and whisper to himself: "Not in an evil hour be it spoken, Lord!" thereby driving away the spell from his dearest wish.

He was of middle height, fair, but nearly grey, and had lost all his teeth. He wore a beard, and had a broad, shapeless nose and large, hollow eyes; it was difficult to say what kind of person he was as long as he sat silent. But only let him move—which, notwithstanding the inseparable stick, he always did hastily, not to say feverishly—only let him pour out his quick words with a tongue moving like a spinning-wheel, and no one who had ever seen a burgher of pure Polish blood could fail to recognize him as a chip of the old block. Stanisław had not long carried on his trade in X——. Having scraped together some money as foreman, he had started a small shop; but he was chiefly famous in the little town as the one maker of good Polish sausages. He had a house next door to the shop, consisting of one room and a tiny kitchen. He did not keep a servant; a big peasant, known as Maciej, prepared his meals and gave him companionship and efficient protection. Hitherto, however, I had known very little of this man.

I did not often visit Światełki, and as a rule

only when I wanted to buy something. So we had chatted in the shop, and I had only seen Maciej in passing. But I had noticed him as something unusually large. He was, indeed, huge; not only tall, but, as rarely happens, broad in proportion. It was this which gave his whole figure its special characteristics, and made it seem imposing rather than tall.

A house calculated for ordinary people he found narrow. Furniture standing far enough apart to suit the average man hampered Maciej. He could not take two steps in the house without knocking against something. He trod cautiously and very slowly, continually looking round; and he always had the ashamed air of a man who feels himself out of place and is persuaded that his strongest efforts will not save him from doing absurd things. I had seen Maciej a few times when, in Światełki's absence, he had taken his place in the shop, where the accommodation was fairly limited. An expression almost of suffering was depicted on his broad face, and especially noticeable when, on approaching the passage between the shelves and the counter, he stood still a moment and measured the extent of the danger with an anxious look. That it existed was undoubted, for the shelves were full of glasses and jugs of all kinds, so that one push could do no little harm. It was a real Scylla and Charybdis for him. He looked indescribably comical, and

was so much worried that after a few minutes the drops of perspiration ran off his forehead. Once I found him there in utter misery, waiting for someone to come. For he had fancied, when going through this passage after settling with a customer, that he had knocked against something behind him, and, not being able to ascertain what it was, he stood and waited, afraid to move until someone came.

"God be praised that you've come!" he exclaimed with delight. "I am fixed here as sure as a Jew comes to a wedding. *He's* gone away and doesn't mean to come back! Good Lord! how little room there is here! I've knocked against some teapot or other, and can't move either way. The devil take all these shelves!" He continued his lamentations when I had set him free. "It's always like this; it's a real misfortune, this want of room. But what does it matter to him? He fits in here; though he has to help himself with a stick, he can spin round like a top."

"He" was, of course, the shoemaker, for Maciej's stupidity caused frequent bickerings, which, however, never became serious between them. Maciej's unwieldiness and awkwardness irritated the nervous, agile shoemaker; while, on the other hand, Maciej could not understand the shoemaker's quickness. But this was not their only cause of contention. The shoemaker, a

burgher, was to a certain extent a man of position, with a deep sense of his higher rank; he wore a coat, and had needs which Maciej regarded as entirely superfluous—in fact, those of a gentleman. In addition, the shoemaker was the owner of the house, and Maciej's employer.

Apart from all this, however, the antagonism revealed in their mutual relations was not deep-seated, but in reality superficial. The shoemaker grumbled at Maciej, and sometimes made fun of him; but he always did it as if he were on equal terms with him, observing the respect due to a peasant of some standing—that is, he always used the form "you," and not "thou," in addressing him. Maciej usually received the shoemaker's grumbling in silence, but sometimes answered his taunts pretty sharply. Besides their common fate and present equality in the eyes of the law, other weighty reasons had an influence in making bearable the relations between people of different classes in one small room.

In comparison with Maciej, the shoemaker possessed intelligence of which the latter could never even have dreamt. The shoemaker could read, and—what gave him a special charm, and no little authority in Maciej's eyes—he could scrawl the eighteen letters of his Christian and surname, although slowly, and always with considerable difficulty. To Maciej's credit, on the other hand, besides his physical strength—

that brute force which impresses even those who are not lame—stood the fact that he took service more from motives of comradeship than of necessity. For he possessed capital of his own, having made several hundred roubles, which were deposited at present at the shoemaker's house. Moreover—the most important thing of all—he was a conscientious and honest man. When, before knowing this, I asked the shoemaker in conversation if he could trust Maciej completely, since he lived alone with him and often left him in the shop, he repeated my question with so much astonishment that I at once realized its thorough inappropriateness. He repeated it, and, not speaking quickly, as usual, but slowly and emphatically, he gave me this answer: "Maciej, sir, is a man—of gold."

Immediately on my arrival the shop was closed and we went into the house. A small table with a chair on either side stood under the only window of the little room. Close behind the chairs there was a bed along one wall, and a small wooden sofa along the other. A narrow opening opposite the table led to the kitchen where Maciej lived. We sat down to consult what to write. Not only the shoemaker, but even Maciej, was in an extremely serious mood; both evidently attached no little importance to the writing of letters. The shoemaker fetched from a trunk a large

parcel tied up in a sheet of paper, and, having taken out the last letters from his wife and son, handed them carefully to me. Maciej squeezed himself into the kitchen, and did not return to us. A moment later, however, his head with the large red face—but his head only—showed like the moon against the dark background of the opening.

"Why do you go so far away, Maciej?" I asked.

"Eh, you see, sir, it's not comfortable sitting in there. I've knocked a bench together here that's a bit stronger."

The shoemaker mumbled something about breaking the chairs, but Maciej busied himself with his pipe and did not hear, or pretended not to hear.

We began to read the letters. The letter from his wife contained the usual account of daily worries, interspersed with wishes for his return and the hope of yet seeing him. The letter from his son, who had finished his apprenticeship as journeyman joiner half a year ago, was sufficiently frivolous. After telling his father that he was now free, he wrote that, as he could not always get work, he was unable to make the necessary amount of money to buy himself a watch, and he begged his father to send him thirteen roubles or more for this purpose. I finished reading this, and looked at the shoemaker, who was carefully

watching the impression the letter was making on me. I tried to look quite indifferent; whether I succeeded to any extent I do not know, for I did not look straight at him. But I was convinced after a moment that my efforts had been vain, for I heard the anxious question: "Well, and what else, sir?" It was clear that his son's letter was very painful to him, even more so than I had supposed.

"Here am I, trying and working all I can, so that in case I return there may be something to live upon and I mayn't have to beg in my old age, and that fool——"

We both began to remonstrate with him that it was unnecessary to take this to heart, and that his son was probably—in fact, certainly—a very good lad, only perhaps a little spoilt, especially if he was the only child.

"Of course he is the only one, for I have never even seen him."

"How—never?"

"Yes, really never; because—I remember it as if it were to-day—it was five o'clock in the evening. I was doing something in the backyard, when my neighbour, Kwiatkowski, called out to me from behind the wooden fence: 'God help you, Stanisław, for they are coming after you!' I only had time to run up to the window and call out: 'Good-bye, Basia; remember St. Stanisław will be his patron!' That's all I said. Basia

was confined shortly after, but I didn't see her again. So it was a good thing I said it, for now there'll always be something to remember me by."

"God be praised that it's so! but if it hadn't been a son——"

Maciej did not finish his sentence, however, for the offended shoemaker began to reprimand him sternly.

"You are talking nonsense, Maciej, and it is not for the first time! Does not the Church also give the name of St. Stanisława? Besides, though I am a sinner as every man is, couldn't I guess that a word spoken at a moment like that would carry weight with the Almighty? Isn't everything in God's hand?"

Maciej looked down, and a deep sigh was the only testimony to the shoemaker's eloquence.

Stanisław's explanation of the circumstances lightened our task very much, and when he had remembered that the mother never complained of her son—on the contrary, was always satisfied with him—we succeeded in calming his excessive anxiety concerning the fate of his only child. In order to settle the matter thoroughly, it was decided to ask some responsible and enlightened person to examine the lad as he should think fit and to keep an eye on him in future, reporting the result of the examination to the father. This was arranged because the mother, being a simple and uneducated woman, was

thought to be possibly much too fond of her only son, and an over-indulgent and blind judge. The only question was the choice of the individual—a sufficiently difficult matter; this one had died, that one had grown rich, the other had lately taken to drink. We meditated long, and would have meditated still longer, if finally the shoemaker had not said firmly, with the air of a man persuaded that he is speaking to the point:

"We will write to the priest!" And when Maciej, glad that the troublesome deliberation was over—possibly, also, in order to regain his position after having just said a stupid thing—hastily supported this with, "Yes, the priest will be best," I conceded to the majority.

Certain difficulties arose from the fact that the priest was not personally known to Światełki, and that, as Maciej put it, "the priest couldn't be approached just anyhow." These difficulties were overcome by the business-like shoemaker, who began by ordering a solemn Requiem Mass for the souls of his parents, for which he sent the priest ten roubles, and in this way commended his son to the kind consideration of his benefactor.

I began to write the letters, of which there were to be three: to his wife, to his son, and to the priest. In the course of my stay in Siberia I had written so many similar letters that I had gained no little facility in this kind of composition. I therefore wrote quickly, only asking for

a few particulars. The shoemaker crept from the bed, on which he had hitherto been sitting, to the chair standing by the table, and bending over this followed the movement of my pen attentively, ready to answer any questions. Maciej cleaned out his pipe in silence. I finished the letters, and proceeded to read them.

Stanisław sent his wife fifty roubles. As he retained a most affectionate remembrance of his faithful Basia, loved her possibly more now than twenty years ago, and could never speak of her without deep emotion, the letter to her corresponded to the feelings of his youth. He was paler than usual as he listened to it, and he tried to say something, but his lips trembled and the words caught in his throat. When the reading was finished, however, Stanisław wriggled in the way peculiar to him, and, after blowing his nose several times, finally articulated: "Now I will sign." Having discovered his spectacles in the table drawer and duly fixed them on his nose, the shoemaker pointed to the place where the signature was to be put, and began:

"Es, tee." He had already opened his mouth to pronounce the third letter, when the incautious Maciej, who had behaved most properly while I was writing, unexpectedly interrupted with:

"If you would also——"

He burst in with this, but of course did not finish. The shoemaker laid down the pen, lifted

his head high, so as to look through his spectacles at Maciej—who without doubt was already regretting his ill-timed remark—and said drily:

"Maciej, you are hindering me."

Maciej grew very red, and, naturally, did not utter another word. The shoemaker finished writing his name without further interruption, and took out the money. In order to avoid mistakes, he at once enclosed it with the letter in an addressed envelope.

However much Stanisław had wished during our consultation to "pull the silly fellow's ears," the letter to his son was indulgent rather than stern. It was easy to guess what that yet unseen son, the one hope of the old burgher family, was to Światełki. He had worked perseveringly and honestly for so many years, and had overcome all kinds of difficulties; lonely and neglected, he had passed victoriously through the temptations to enrich himself easily with which Siberia beguiles the unsuspecting novice. Doubtless he owed all this in a certain degree to the honest principles he had brought from his home and country, as well as to his character, but, without any doubt, equally to that son in whose very birth he saw the Hand of God. It was clear that the poor fellow dreamt of standing before his beloved child as an ascetic dreams of appearing at the Judgment-Seat. The thought that he would be able to tell him—openly and fearlessly—"I have

nothing to bring you, my son, but a name unstained by a past full of the gravest temptations," was the lodestar of his life. Taking this into consideration, therefore, I did not scold the "silly fool," but explained to him in an affectionate way what the money was the father was sending to the family—money he had earned by working extremely hard, and frequently by pinching himself. I told the lad what he ought to be and might become, being strong and healthy, and that on this account his wish for money to spend on trifles gave his father pain. I wrote large and distinctly, adapting myself to the young joiner's powers of comprehension, and at the end fervently blessed him in his new walk in life.

The reading of this letter was carried on with constant interruptions, as I stopped to ascertain if I had interpreted the father's feelings and wishes rightly. From the beginning I was sure that this was the case, and became all the more certain of it as I read on. Each time I looked at him inquiringly, Stanisław answered me hastily: "Yes, yes, yes, that's just as I wanted it!" But the farther I read the shorter and quicker became the "Yes, yes." In the middle of the letter, it is true, he opened his lips once more, but I only saw that they were moving, for they did not utter a sound. I looked up again: his chin was resting on the table, and the tears were flowing down his pale cheeks. He did not make

the restless movements peculiar to him when his feelings overflowed. He did not scrape his throat or blow his nose. He merely rested his chin on the table, and, sitting near me by the candle, with its light falling upon him, he quietly cried before us. He did not quiver or sob, but the tears, which had certainly not flowed from those hollow eyes for a long time, streamed from them now. When he was calm he looked at me with his large, intelligent eyes, and thanked me without raising his head. "May the Lord repay you—may the Lord repay you!" But Maciej, having already expressed his satisfaction by ejaculations and indistinct mumbling, now took courage at a longer pause to make quite a speech.

"H'm—that's fine! I've listened to lots of letters, because in the gold-mines different people wrote letters for me and others. And even here, though Z—— no doubt writes very well, he writes so learnedly, like a printed book, that you don't understand a word when you listen to it. For he puts in so many words folks don't use, you can see in a moment that he comes from a Jewish or a big family, and that he has never had much to do with the people. Now, your letter goes straight to one's heart, for it's human. Oh, poor fellow! He'll cry like an old woman at a sermon when he reads it. If you would also—but I daren't ask"—and his voice sounded really very shy—"if you would write a short letter like

that to my people too, oh how my old woman would cry,—she would cry!"

While I read the letter to the priest, Maciej kept quiet, listening and possibly also beginning to consider what I was to write to his wife, if I answered to the hopes he had placed in me. But when I came to the passage in which I asked the priest about the Mass for the shoemaker's dead parents, there was a violent crash in the entrance to the kitchen, and Maciej stood before us in all his impressiveness. His appearance was so unexpected, and made with so much noise, that we looked at him in astonishment. Maciej was strangely altered, and even seemed to me to be trembling all over. He came out in silence, and standing just in front of us, with his feet wide apart as usual, he began to search for his pocket; but whether it was difficult to find in the folds of his baggy trousers, or whether for some other reason, he was a long time about it. Having found it, he drew out a small purse, and, after a long process of untying, for which he also used his teeth, he took out a crumpled three-rouble note. He stood a while holding this. At last he laid it on the table with a shaking hand, and began in an imploring, broken voice:

"If that's so—when he says the Mass, let him pray for us unhappy folks too: write that, sir. Let him pray to Almighty God and to the Holy Virgin—if it's only to bring our bones back

there — and perhaps — perhaps They'll have mercy."

" Perhaps They'll have mercy," the shoemaker repeated like an echo, as he stood beside Maciej.

They stood before me—these two old men grown grey in adversity—as small children stand before a stern father, feeling their helplessness; the lame shoemaker with the hollow eyes, leaning on his stick, and that huge peasant with his hands hanging down and head bowed humbly, imploring this in a quiet whisper.

We should certainly have sat there a long while in painful musing if it had not been for the shoemaker. Stanisław was the first to rouse himself from the lethargy into which we had fallen.

" What the devil are we doing ! Maciej, bestir yourself ! The sausages are burning in there, and the brandy is getting stale ! Eh, Maciej, look sharp !"

Maciej crept to the kitchen, and returned to us —not, to say the truth, very quickly—preceded by the smell of well-fried sausages. We shook off our lethargy so slowly, however, that even the brisk shoemaker had to make an effort to put a good face on it. His first toast was, " The success of the letters." To this Maciej responded with " Amen," and a sigh which might have come from a pair of blacksmith's bellows. The vodka did

its work, however. Our recent emotion strengthened its effect, and after two glasses even an observant person would never have guessed what we had thought and felt here a few moments earlier, but for the letters lying in Stanisław's trunk. The last vestiges of sadness were charmed away by the little song which Stanisław began to sing:

" The splinters fall in showers
Where woodmen trees are felling;
Oh, good and pretty children
Are dear beyond all telling !"

But in his present cheerful frame of mind Maciej protested energetically against even this slight echo of sadness.

" Eh ! just you shut up about your children ! I've five of them, and I don't care as much for them all together as you do for the one."

The shoemaker evidently acknowledged the justice of this bold remark, for he passed it over in silence, and only proposed to Maciej with a gesture to put on the samovar. Maciej did his work in the kitchen noisily and cheerily. He had completely forgotten about his favourite place, " the little bench a bit stronger," and he returned to us without delay. His voice, always absolutely unsuited to the acoustic properties of the room, now sounded as perhaps it once did in those years on the fields of Mazowsze. When he spoke, it was simply a shout, for he did not modify the

intonation by any expression whatever. He talked about his work, gesticulated, and waved his arms; when obliged to stand up, he moved suddenly, and the same when he sat down; he became indignant, and retracted his words; he squeezed his fingers together and spread them out; but he did all this slowly and accurately, just in the way he spoke. He said not a single word nor related a single fact without supporting and illustrating it by expressive mimicry, by a movement or a pose, which he always tried to make as near the original as possible. So when I returned to his protests against the shoemaker's sadness, and asked him: "Have you five sons, Maciej?" he answered: "Five, like the five fingers on my hand"; and, holding up his fist, he carefully spread out his fingers one by one. He laughed long and heartily at this, in the way that only children laugh, his whole body shaking.

But it was not only his laugh that was child-like; Maciej's big broad face, portraying his inward calm, reminded me of the face of a little child whose thoughts have as yet not influenced its features. In proportion to his height and breadth Maciej's head seemed to me smaller than it really was. His wide neck diminished it still more. But when he sat down, resting his hands on his knees in his usual manner, somehow his head disappeared entirely, and then from behind he was very like a pointed hayrick, while from

the side he reminded me of those clumsy but impressive figures which people of past ages cut out in rocks and stone.

The longer I looked at him, the stronger became my wish to know this huge fellow rather better, and to ascertain something more about him. I therefore decided to profit by the occasion, which possibly might not soon occur again, and to spend the whole evening with the shoemaker.

Maciej chattered tremendously; he talked bidden and unbidden, and was even more loquacious than I could have hoped. Although he talked disconnectedly, with continual long digressions from the subject, I listened to him with growing interest. His anecdotes were chiefly about his life in the gold-mines. However familiar that life was to me from a number of different stories, I listened to him patiently, for I was interested in the very ticklish question of how he could have saved together several hundred roubles in surroundings where riches can always be accumulated, but rarely in a legitimate manner.

" I worked—slaved—in the gold-mines," Maciej continued on his return from the kitchen. " At first they put me to work underground, but the inspector saw me, and called out, ' Who's that huge fellow ?' as if he'd never seen a big man before, the low scoundrel ! He was told: ' That's Maciej, one of the Poles.' ' He's a good-looking

Pole. Bring him here.' They sent for me, and I came and took off my cap "—Maciej touched his head. " But I didn't bow. Oh no! why should I? 'What a blockhead! Where do you come from?' he asked. 'Ha-ha! and where am I likely to come from if not from Poland!' Afterwards he asked again: 'Can you bake bread?' 'Is he making a fool of me, or what does he mean?' I thought to myself, but I didn't let on, and said: 'That's a woman's work, not a man's' —so I explained to him; devil knows if he understood or not! But he ordered them to take me on as baker's assistant.

" There just was drunkenness and thieving and carrying on in the bakery! Good God! But I didn't interfere; I just did what they said, and they didn't tell me to superintend or look after things. When my mates saw that I obeyed them, and worked enough for two, and didn't meddle with anything, they began to carry on worse than ever. It was like a tavern for the drinking that went on. The inspector came one, two, three times: everyone in the bakery was drunk; I was the only one at work and kneading the loaves of bread. He looked and went away. He came again the next day, and there was quite a battle going on in the house; they were having a drunken fight. He ordered them to be put into prison, and he asked me again: 'Now you know how to make bread; you've learnt it, haven't you?'

So I understood he wasn't joking, and laughed: 'Oh yes, I've learnt it,' I said.

"He put me to be head baker. They dealt out all the flour used in the bakery for the whole week—and there was a lot used, for we baked for more than two hundred people. So I did my work, and weighed the flour to make it last out. Scarcely was the week over, when the inspector came again: 'Well, Maciej,' he said, 'have you had enough flour?' I just said nothing, but took him to the bakery and showed him what was left—nearly three sacks. When he saw that he opened his eyes ever so wide. 'Good! good!' he said; and he called the storekeeper and told him to make a note of how much was left, and to save half of it and give me half as reward.

"Now, in these gold-mines it just happens one way or the other: sometimes such a lot of people come you don't know where to put them, and sometimes, when they start running away, there aren't enough left even to go underground. And that's how it was there: a lot of work, and too few people to do it. First they took one man away from me, and afterwards a second, and after a week still more, so that I was left with one, and then quite alone for a few days. I was standing at the kneading trough and oven from sunrise to sunrise. When the inspector saw that I was without help, and the sweat was running off my forehead, he called out: 'Vodka! Let

Maciej have as much as he wants! Drink as much as you like,' he said. I didn't stint myself; but a single glass makes one bad enough, so half a bottle was saved every day. This was my own, and in this way I got nearly a rouble a day.[1]

" But whether by slaving like this, or what not, I don't know how it was: anyway I got ill. My feet and arms seemed paralyzed all at once; dark spots came on my body, and my teeth got all shaky, like keys in an organ. ' Take him off to the hospital,' they said. The doctor said it was scurvy. Whether or no, it was a fact I got worse and worse. At last one of the miners lying in the hospital, an old Brodiaga[2], said to me: ' Don't you pay any attention to them or to the doctor, for they'll cure you for the next world. Listen to good advice. Send someone to the taiga for toadstools, fill a bottle with them, and after it has been standing a certain time and has got strong, drink a wineglass of it with vodka every day.' I did just as he told me, and after a week I was quite fit again.

[1] Vodka could only be procured at the stores belonging to the mine-owners, and was dealt out in limited quantities. On this account there was a flourishing contraband trade. A gallon of even inferior quality was sold for a hundred roubles. A strong, sober miner, able to forgo his vodka and sell it, could make a good sum in this way.—*Author's note.*

[2] Brodiaga—a criminal deported to Siberia, who has escaped from prison, or who, not having been sentenced to imprisonment, cannot find work, and has become a vagrant or bandit.

'Afterwards I saw the Brodiaga coming along. I thought: 'He'll expect to be treated.' So I stood treat for him. He said: 'Well, what did you think of it?'

"'I think it was a good trick, but I don't want to do it a second time.'

"'You're right,' he said. 'Have you ever seen the cook draw the veins out of the meat when he's getting the inspector's cutlets ready?'

"'Oh yes! Rather!' I said.

"'Now, you see, if you stop here, they'll draw all the veins and all the strength out of you. You've saved a little money; go away from here, and don't look back.'

"I left the hospital, and went to get my 'time.' But it was a difficult business. 'Stop here,' they said to me, 'stop here, and we'll raise your wages.' And so on. But I didn't agree. 'Your money is good, but dear,' I answered. The inspector got very angry, and shouted, 'Ass!' And they counted it out to me: I had got a round sum of a thousand roubles, all but a hundred and fifty."

"Did you really drink that stuff, Maciej?"

"A-ah! It was the first medicine I ever took," he answered.

But the shoemaker, understanding my incredulity, set it aside by an excellent explanation:

"No fear! Even two bottles of toadstools wouldn't hurt a machine like that!"

Maciej disapproved of the expression.

"Am I a machine now? Why, you only see half of what I was!"

"Then, you were stouter formerly?"

"Oh yes! I tell you, I wasn't like this. What do I look like now? A greyhound grown thin! Is this an arm?" And he untwisted his shirt sleeve and showed us an arm of which a leg might have been jealous. "Is this a leg?" Drawing his wide trousers tight, he looked piteously at his leg measuring over a yard round. "I usedn't to be like this," he ended with a sigh.

Nothing could have given me more satisfaction than these sighs. But a good beginning had been made, for Maciej, who certainly very rarely experienced the relief of unburdening himself, was so excited that he required no stronger incentive than that I should listen to him with unfeigned interest. It was enough to repeat, "What then? Just so! Really!" oftener and more pressingly. Thus spurred on, each time Maciej's "Ha, ha!" became louder and his face redder, and when the samovar had boiled he declined to obey the shoemaker and would not pour out the tea.

"Can I never have a talk? When do I ever get a chance of speaking to anyone? You're in the shop; you know what to do and how to talk

to people, but I don't. It's not only with those who come here; I can't do it even with our own people, I'm such a plain man. It's dull to be alone, and I'm losing flesh; but there's no one I can go to, for people get bored with me. The master here understands every word I say, and isn't surprised and doesn't laugh at anything. I can talk to him like one of my own family, and feel lighter at heart at once. Do pour out for yourself. I don't want that stupid tea."

Although shocked at this distinct subversion of the order of society, the shoemaker allowed himself to be mollified, and began to pour out tea. Maciej, freed from one of his most trying duties, became all the livelier.

We both settled ourselves on the sofa. Maciej was to tell me his past history from the beginning. He was as red as a peony, but, strange to say, he sat silent, and although I prompted him several times with, "Well, and what next, Maciej?" he did not speak. Yet his deep breathing showed that this silence did not mean speechlessness. On the contrary, it was thought slowly working and stirring him to expression.

Maciej sat upright, with his knees wide apart and both hands resting on them. He sat thus for some minutes, with eyes which seemed fixed on the far distance; he sat motionless as though he were already away in that distant scene which, possibly, was opening before him. Yet, when

observed closely, his face was burning. I was on the point of putting a more urgent question to him, when Maciej, looking neither at me nor at the shoemaker, began as follows:

"You must have heard of a large river—it's swift and black—they call it Narew? Not far from that river there are three big villages, called Mocarze.

"I've seen many, many different villages, and I've looked at many different people. I've seen the big Tartar villages, and the Russian settlements, as large as towns, and the villages on the River Angara and behind Lake Baikal, and where the Poles are so well off;[1] but nowhere, nowhere have I seen villages like our Mocarze.

"There isn't a thing you can't find there. Everything's there. My God!" And Maciej stretched out his arms.

"And those meadows and fields and the haytime! Oh! those young oak-woods, and the corn, too, like gold!

"Here everything is big, but somehow it's dreary. What can you see in the taiga? What's there to enjoy in the fields? It's like a grave all round you: a vulture crying above, a bear growling in the taiga, and that's all the pleasure you get! At home it's different.

"There, if you go out in the morning through

[1] The Poles deported to Siberia from Poland in the eighteenth century.

the fields with the dew on them, and shout, it sounds like a bell ringing in the open air. You watch the cheerfulness of the animals, and listen to the birds chirping on the ground and above, and you feel cheerful too. And if you breathe the air coming from those fields and meadows, as if it came from a censer in church, you feel its strength going into you. I've never felt so strong anywhere as at sunrise at Mocarze, when I used to say 'Good-morning!' to the sun. Here the morning's no morning—there's no pleasure in it; none of the birds or animals or people know anything about it. At home it's different.

"I've seen so many countries; I've been through all this big Siberia, and a good bit of the Lake Baikal country, but I've never seen a country like ours anywhere. But I've learnt that since being here. Yes, here! Am I the only one? We've clever people at home—priests and gentlemen and peasants with heads on their shoulders—but none of them know what they have!

"Each of these villages called Mocarze has its own name. They call the one that's the oldest, Korzeniste; the second, Suche; and the third, which is the newest, Mokry. I am from Mocarze-Suche.

"It's a big village. Pan Olszeski was our master, and we were his serfs. Everyone knows

it's not very pleasant to be that. When I was about twenty, Olszeski took me into his service at the house.

"He was a very quick-tempered man, yellow, dry, and small—the very devil, I can tell you! He wasn't really bad, only when he was angry; but he got angry about everything, and then he'd just be beside himself with rage—oh my goodness! Yet not for long. He'd shout and run up and down and get yellower still; but when he'd finished you could say anything to him, and, though he'd tremble, he'd listen and say nothing. He was just. It can't be said that the young men liked him, but the older ones—the farmers—always told us: 'Don't take any notice of his shouting; his bark is worse than his bite.' And they were right. He never harmed and never worried people; but this I only knew later. At the time I only knew that Olszeski was bad-tempered, and I feared him like fire, and—well, every bad thing. But I don't know how it came about; the farther I went from him, the more he came after me. He was always at me, scolding, cursing, and shouting. But I remembered what my father had said: 'Don't take any notice of his being angry, but remember that he's just'; so I stood it—stood it and never said a word. And I should have stood it longer if Olszeski hadn't gone too far. But he said everything he could think of against me, and at last, on purpose

to wound my feelings, he began to call me a 'stupid great booby' and 'greenhorn.' Even now I don't like to think about it. He happened to come into the yard. Though I was at work, and he didn't see me, and I ran away from him like a hare from a dog, he at once began to shout: 'Eh, there! you stupid great booby, you greenhorn!' His voice was like himself, thin and shrill, and so penetrating it sounded like a whistle. When he called me all those names I boiled over with rage. It was only he who thought me stupid, not my own people. There wasn't a fellow in the village equal to me, either with the fiddle at the inn or at the hardest field work. For I never shirked work any more than play. And I was so strong—I'm speaking seriously—not as I am now; if there was ever anything anyone couldn't do, Maciej did it.

"And then to be insulted like that, and go on standing it—why should I? So I thought, 'There's been enough of this, and I've had enough of it, too! With God's help I'll show him I'm not so stupid, and not such a booby.' I don't know if I could do it now, but at that time there wasn't a team I couldn't have held. When I was holding them from behind, you could have beaten the horses to death, they wouldn't have stirred. I hadn't tried with the carriage horses; the coachman wouldn't allow it. 'You'll get the landau smashed, and I'm responsible,' he said.

But I thought: 'Let come what may, I'll try.'

"It was a Sunday when he ordered the horses to be put to, but not to go to church, for he was driving alone, only to go to the town. He got in, sat down, shut the door, and waited. He liked the horses to start off at once at a sharp trot. But I was behind. I put my feet wide apart to stand firm. I took hold of the side of the landau with one hand, and of the back with the other. My heart was going like a mill, for I was thinking: 'Perhaps I shan't be able to hold horses in such good condition.' But you're all right after the start. I gathered all my strength together, and strained forward till my joints cracked. The horses started—they started once, twice, and—didn't move a step.

"'Go on!' a shrill voice called out from the landau, while the mistress and the young ladies stood at the window waving their handkerchiefs.

"'Go on, blockhead!' and his shrill voice went into a squeak.

"But the old coachman must have guessed what was happening, for, when he saw the horses didn't move, he didn't whip them, so that there shouldn't be an accident. He didn't slash at them, but turned to the master and said: 'How can I start while Maciej is holding on?' Olszeski jumped as if he'd been scalded, and trembled so much he couldn't get his breath. The carriage

was half open, so he turned towards me, quite green with anger, and looked me straight in the face. But I held on, and when once I'd looked at him I didn't take my eyes off him; my veins swelled from holding on to the carriage, and the blood went to my head. What I was like I don't know, but my master looked and looked. I thought: 'God knows what he'll do to me.' But he must have understood, for he only laughed, and said: 'How strong you are! How strong you are! But now let go, Maciej.' I let go, and the horses started off; I thought they would bolt."

Maciej sat down tired, for he had been reproducing the whole scene of holding back the carriage as accurately as possible before us. He had stood leaning sideways, had held the carriage with his hand, been tugged at by the powerful horses, and had looked his master threateningly in the face; even his eyes had become bloodshot, and his tightly clenched hands had swelled.

If, wearing his clumsy "juntas,"[1] grey-headed, bent, and but half his weight, he looked splendid and threatening, if his eyes flashed now, what must he have been like when he faced his master in defence of his human dignity?

"From that time," Maciej continued, after a short pause, "my master was different. Not all

[1] "Juntas"—boots without heels, with soft soles and wide legs.

at once, it's true; for at first he avoided me, and, though he left off scolding, he never said a word for a long time. I thought to myself: 'I'm in for something worse; he's surely thinking out something for me I shan't forget.' But no. He began to talk to me, but always good-naturedly and kindly, and a year hadn't passed before I was high in his favour. If anyone had to be sent out with money, or go with the mistress or young ladies, no one might do it but Maciej; and later, when he knew me, he didn't tell me: 'Don't get drunk, don't be too long, and don't kill the horses'; he only said I was to go, and everything he had ordered was as right as if it had been written in a book. So he got fond of me. I never heard a bad word from him all the last years I was in his house. And I was very happy. But though I was happy there, I had my future to think of, too. Though my father often talked of it, I myself certainly shouldn't have troubled to get married in a hurry, and didn't think much about it. For why think of anything better when you're happy? And no one runs away from happiness. There was work, but there was plenty of fun.

"What a happy time the harvest at home used to be! And when our Mocarze fiddler played at the inn on Sundays, even the old people couldn't keep their feet still.

"And our girls! Hah! There aren't such

girls anywhere. For example, do you ever see one like them here? When they were all together, and you came up, they were like flowers—like the lilies themselves. And when you heard them tittering, 'Hi! hi! hi!' and saw their bright eyes behind their aprons, you didn't know yourself that you were calling out: 'Heh there! Go ahead, you fellows! Now then, fiddler, strike up something lively! Come along, my dear!' "

Maciej was about to start off dancing, for he burst out with the 'Heh there!' so energetically that it set our ears tingling. But a scornful remark of the shoemaker checked him.

"They hid behind their aprons? What vulgar foolishness!"

Maciej, who had already started up, sat down, but would not allow the shoemaker's words to pass.

"Vulgar? Everyone knows it's not like in a town. But don't be disagreeable. Now, among these girls the best-looking seemed to me——"

"Kaśka?" interposed the shoemaker.

"No, not Kaśka, but Marya. She was the best girl in Mocarze, and though she had no mother, and was alone at home, she was tidy and hard-working, and everything round her was clean.

"In the field she always went at the head of the mowers. She could always be seen when she was standing in the corn, it never hid her. My

Marya was a fine girl, well grown, and red like a poppy or cherries in the sun. And her body was so healthy—it was as hard as a nut. When I wanted to pinch her——"

"Did you pinch her cheek?" the shoemaker interrupted impertinently.

"Don't talk bosh! Am I a gentleman, or do I come from a town, that I should pinch a girl's cheek, to say nothing of the girl being my Marya? I pinched where we are all used to pinching the girls——"

The shoemaker was triumphant and smiled ironically. Obviously this peasant did not know the most elementary rules of genteel behaviour.

"A girl like a turnip, I tell you," Maciej continued. "Strong as my fingers are—but no—nothing to be done—you couldn't pinch her, anyhow.

"I courted her, and it seemed to me that she wasn't against it; for she was always looking at me, and danced best with me. So I thought to myself: 'I'll just see how I stand in this.' So one Sunday evening I watched her going off to the dance, and she had to climb over the fence near the Wojciecks' cottage. I stood and waited there. I heard her coming; I heard, because one can always hear one's girl coming a long way off. She came to the fence, lifted her foot, jumped on to the other side, and was just going to hop down, when I, who was watching all this, couldn't

stand it any longer; I ran up to the fence and put my arm round her waist. You know, sir, there's a song which ends:

"'Maiden, turn not from me . . .'

"Well, I sang the song as I held her, and wanted to kiss her. But I hadn't finished the last words before she gave me such a slap between the eyes that it quite blinded me, and before I could take it in—thwack! she went on my jaw, first one side and then another. 'So there's a kiss for you, that's your kiss, you fine fellow! You just keep away from me!' she shouted, and thwacked and thwacked like a tadpole in the water. My word! how she did go for me! I was so taken aback I couldn't come to myself; I could only feel my cheeks swelling from the blows, for she was such a strong girl. At last she stopped and sat down on the fence, and began to cry and say:

"'I never expected a disgrace like this from you, Maciej. Am I just anyone, and not a respectable farmer's daughter, that you should put yourself in my way when I was coming across the fence?'

"When she said this, I understood; still, I wasn't able to come to my senses all at once, and out it slipped: 'But why?' I said. It was just as if I'd covered her with hot coals!

"'Why? Why?' she cried. 'Are you a little boy? Aren't you a farm labourer? You're a

clever fellow, to begin courting and not to know how to make up to a respectable girl! Well, if you're such a fool, I'll tell you: the way to do it is through one's parents!'

"Now, that went to my heart so much I was ready to cry like a calf. I asked: 'Will you have me?'

"'Are you cracked? Doesn't my father know you?' she said.

"'And you, Marya?' I said.

"'Well, why not—of course, if father tells me.'

"'Ah!' I thought to myself, 'a girl like that's a good one; I'm lucky if I get her!' And, if I hadn't been careful not to vex her again, I'd have taken her into my arms once more. But someone came along, and down she jumped and ran to the dance; and back home I came, for my cheeks were as swollen as the white loaves father sometimes brought back from the fair at Lomza. I didn't have any supper, I went straight to bed; but the next day I went to my parents and told them all about it, and asked them to arrange the match at once. They were surprised I was in such a hurry; but I was obstinate, and begged for it. The worst was to know how it would be about the master. But it was no use, I couldn't do it without him; so I went and asked him, and he was very kind to me. He set me free from his service, and gave me a field ready sown as a start, and a farm of twenty acres.

" We put in our banns, and had a wedding such as the oldest people in Mocarze didn't remember. For though my parents and her parents weren't so very rich, they were well-to-do farmers; and as to the drink, the master gave that. We did dance and all enjoy ourselves !"

Maciej stopped abruptly.

" Those seven years I lived with my wife were the only ones in which I have really lived," Maciej began again slowly and emphatically, as though weighing each word. " Marya was a wonderful girl, but she was a still better wife.

" A child was born almost every year about Christmas time. But she never had any trouble with it, for she could have nursed three at once. They were all boys, and they are all as like me as peas in a pod."

The sadness we could hear in Maciej's voice, and the way in which he paused, showed that the bright part of the story was now nearly ended.

" The home was clean and tidy, both the food and clothes," Maciej added in a measured tone. " And as to the farm, there's no need to speak of that, either. I was successful all round; I only wanted the moon !"

Maciej became silent, and somehow we felt that with his last words the golden thread of his life had snapped. We felt that as the story went on it would be different, and we longed for it to continue as it had been. Therefore, although

knowing it to be vain, we deceived ourselves by the hope that we should still hear a merry laugh, and watch the continuance of that tranquil life, though, maybe, only for a moment longer. But, rocked by memories, Maciej let his head fall on his broad chest, and remained mournfully silent. Possibly he was chasing the last gleams of those brighter days which had disappeared without return, or possibly, as he looked, the days of fear and pain emerged from the twilight of the distant past.

The snowstorm was raging outside, and the wild howling of the wind could be heard distinctly now in the quiet of the little room. Suddenly it gave a louder moan, and shook the shutter as though trying to blow it off its hinges. Maciej must have heard this, for he raised his head, and, as if to put an end to his own thoughts, spoke at last.

"Perhaps everything might have been the same to-day, if it hadn't been for that misfortune. . . . If it hadn't been for that misfortune," he repeated slowly, as we both instinctively moved closer to him to comfort him.

"But directly the storm[1] broke out life became different in our village. All the strong young fellows went off, and I shouldn't have kept at home either, if the master hadn't said: 'No; what has to be done there can be done without

[1] The Polish Revolution of 1863.

you, and you can be useful here.' Well, he knew better than I did; so I stayed. Yet at first Marya and I both thought: 'Why is he keeping me here?' for I was sitting doing nothing for weeks. But suddenly one night, just before it got light, there was great excitement in the village. Some horsemen came riding up, people began to tear about, and there wasn't time to say two Paternosters before it was all round the village: 'They're coming! They're coming!' How the news spread so quickly, just like a cry, Lord only knows! But as it spread, every single living thing was on its feet at once, and rushing out into the road. Only a few had time to dress, and most people ran out as they were, in their shirts.

"Then the master sent for me. I was always at work from that time, and it was rare for me to spend a night at home. I knew all the country for ten miles round, so, if anything was wanted, it was I who had to go everywhere. With or without a letter, on horseback or on foot, I was on the trot for whole days and nights, taking and bringing messages, or acting as guide to someone. I could scarcely come home and sit down to supper before the master knocked at the window; I put a bit of bread and cheese in my coat pocket, and off I set. Marya cried to herself, and she very rarely missed going to Mass. But God took care of me. I didn't like riding, because horses easily

came to grief under my weight; it was better for me to walk.

"So half a year passed. I remember coming back from my last journey. I had been crossing a bog in the wood that only anyone knowing the way could get through. But I came through it, and stayed at home a day—in fact, two—and they didn't send for me from the house. I waited a third, and nobody came.

"'What's the matter? Is he ill, or what's up?' I asked the household servants.

"'No,' they said, 'he's out walking and driving; but he isn't like himself, for he's even stopped shouting.' I asked again: 'Didn't he send for me?' 'No,' they said, 'he didn't send for you.' What had happened? I couldn't get clear about it. Marya was glad—like a silly woman. 'Ah!' she said, 'you've become such a gadabout, you don't like being at home now!' But when I said to her, 'Shut your mouth, Marya, or I'll shut it for you!' she saw there was no joking, and stopped talking. On the fourth day I couldn't stand it; I dressed and went to the master's house. In spite of having been allowed to go to the master's room at any time of day or night all that half-year, I went into the kitchen, and let him know that I had come.

"He called me in, and I went in and bowed, but he was a bit strange. He seemed cross, and was walking about, searching for something among

his papers, and didn't look at me when he spoke to me. So far he had always looked straight at me when he said anything, and then I had understood. This time he didn't.

"'Well, well, Maciej,' he said, 'what have you to tell me?'

"I was very much surprised, for what should I have to tell him? But since he asked, I said: 'I've come to see if there are any messages to be taken, sir.'

"'Yes,' he answered the same way as before. 'I was just thinking of sending for you. There's a letter to be taken to Korzeniste.'

"He sat down, wrote it, and gave it to me.

"I wasn't pleased, for I knew there was nothing going on at Korzeniste; but, on the other hand, I thought it was stupid of me, for how should I know everything? So, though this didn't seem to me to be right, I felt cheered up. I took the message quickly, and came back and asked when he wanted me to come again.

"'Oh,' he said, 'there's sure to be nothing urgent now; and if there is, I'll send for you.'

"Again he didn't look at me as he said this, and seemed strange. That hurt me, for I knew that he was sending people on errands whom he never used to send. But I daren't speak; I went and waited.

"And I waited again for several days; no news of the master. I didn't leave my farm during

that time, for truth's truth, and through my always being away there was a lot to do at home. I tidied up my clothes and went to see people.

"On Saturday evening I went to the inn. When I passed the Wojciecks' cottage where the fence is, some people were standing at the corner of the house. They didn't see me coming. I came near, and heard them talking quite loud When I got nearer and they saw me, they looked at each other, and not another word was spoken. I said, 'Christ be blessed!' but only Jedrek mumbled, 'In Eternity!'[1] I thought they were perhaps talking about something among themselves, so I passed on.

"It was the same at the inn. There was a noise going on there, because it was the day before a festival, and, as is usual then, there were a lot of peasants sitting drinking vodka or beer. When I went in, they looked at me and there was silence in a moment, just as if the word had been given for it. I paid no attention, I came in, sat down, and ordered my glass; but I saw that people didn't talk to me as if I belonged to them. 'What's up? Good Lord! is it because I've worked for the master, or what?'

"But they've always known that; and they also know that, though I've served under the master, I was really working for another reason; they've known that a long time, and it's never

[1] The greeting commonly used by the peasants.

been like this before. So it must be something else.

"I went home quite upset. When Marya looked at me, she saw in a moment that there was something wrong, and began at once, like a woman does: 'What's the matter, my dear? tell me what it is.' I saw she was thinking—Lord knows what; so I told her: 'People won't speak to me as they used to; why, I don't know.' And I told her about it. Then Marya clasped her hands, and said: 'I know whose fault it is: no one's but that scoundrel Mateus.' Now, Mateus was my elder brother, and though there's a proverb, 'The apple falls near the tree,' this time it wasn't true; for neither my parents nor grandparents were that sort, and he was nothing more nor less than a scoundrel. I asked: 'How is it his fault?' 'It's his fault,' Marya said. 'People speak badly of him; not to my face or to our family, but I and my father have heard them say: "They are always off in different directions." And others say: "Honour among thieves"; what Maciej hears at the house[1] Mateus sells to the German colonists or to the Jewish bailiff; and so on.' I didn't listen to any more; my hair stood on end.

"I asked: 'Why didn't you tell me this before?' and lifted up my hand to strike her. But Marya pulled me up.

[1] *I.e.*, about the Revolutionists' plans. Maciej is accused of being a spy.

"'Are you mad?' she said, 'shouting as if you were possessed! I wanted to speak to you before, but you always told me to shut my mouth. Have you forgotten?'

"I felt quite weak, and my feet trembled as if they were coming off. I couldn't stand.

"'But, good Lord!' I said, 'that can't be true! Even if it were, is one brother to answer for another, or a father for his son?' I couldn't sleep all night; all sorts of thoughts kept coming into my head. I made up my mind I would go to church next day. I prayed, but I could understand nothing. I didn't dare to go up to the house, but hoped God would help me.

"When I went to church I didn't stop or look at people. I prayed all through the Mass, and got calmer, and made up my mind to go to my brother and ask him what he was really doing. However, I noticed people looking at me when church was over, as they'd watch a wolf. As I went across the cemetery near a crowd of boys, I heard such bad things being said that again my feet trembled. 'Oh, my God, save me!' I thought, and daren't look up. I came home. My father was there. I told him all this: Mateus was disgracing us; should I go and speak to him?

"'You ought to have done it long ago,' my father said. 'But be careful, for devil knows what he'll do to you!'

"'He can't do worse than he's done,' I said,

and went. I crossed myself with holy water. I really had to shout at Marya, for she clung to me like a tipsy man to a fence. 'Don't go, don't go! may the dogs eat him!' she said. 'If people don't know it already, they'll soon see that you've no dealings with him.' I went, and after saying, 'Christ be blessed!' I said at once:

"'I've business with you, Mateus; I want to talk to you.'

"'All right,' he said.

"'It's business I want to have a good talk to you about privately, and at once.'

"He looked confused, and plainly guessed what it was, for he said:

"'Let's go into the backyard.'

"'Certainly not into the backyard,' I said; 'there are people about there, looking. Let's go into the field.'

"When I said this to him he looked askance at me, and I'm sure he thought something bad was up, for he said:

"'All right, but sit down and wait a moment. I'm going into my neighbour's, and shall be back before long.'

"He really came back at once, and we went behind the stackyard into the field. There was a wood at the edge of the field. As we went through the stackyard, we found Walek standing behind the barn—he was a great friend of my brother's — a disagreeable fellow. When my

brother saw him, he smiled to himself in a nasty way. A shudder went through me: 'It's plain that what people say is true,' I thought, and went along depressed, and didn't speak because Walek was with us.

"'Well, Maciej, say what you have to say,' Mateus said, and looked at me as if he were making fun of me and were quite sure of himself.

"That made me feel worse, and I went along with them sadder still. We came like that to the wood, and there my brother began to talk very fast. I remember every word.

"'Ah!' he said, 'you wanted to talk to me; but I see it's I who'll talk to you. Perhaps,' he said, 'it's as well you've come to me; just listen to good advice. It's plain you're not doing yourself much good with all this running about, for I hear you run round the master's house like a dog. Now, I can fix you up in a business which will bring you in more than two years' wages. The German colonist——'

"I didn't hear any more, and it's plain he didn't look at me when he said this; for if he'd looked, the idiot! he'd have run away. The blood rushed to my head, left it, and rushed back again. I roared like a wild beast, and sprang on them. I couldn't speak, but I had terrific strength. I twisted his hands together on to his back with my left hand, as if they were string, took him by the middle, and lifted him up. Walek's hand I

squeezed so hard that the bones cracked, and he stood there as lifeless as a stone.

"I let him go, and took my knife, which I always carried in the leg of my boot, and handed it to Walek. 'Hit here!' I shouted, and held Mateus' left side towards him. He had to strike. The knife was sharp, and went in up to the handle. The blood poured out in a stream.

"They took me up the very next day.

"'Was it you?' they asked.

"'Yes.'

"'Why did you do it?' they asked. I told them. They didn't ask any more; I was condemned for life."

I looked at Maciej. He was as pale as a corpse, whiter than the white wall against which he was sitting. He did not move his hands, but his fingers twitched convulsively.

I felt sorry that I had induced him to live through that terrible scene once more, and looked into his eyes, reproaching myself. But as I looked I turned pale myself; his eyes were pure and bright as a spring of water, calm and innocent as the eyes of a child.

The northerly gale raged outside, whirling the snow round impetuously. I had a feeling of horror as I returned through the solitary miserable streets to my empty house on the bank of the Lena. The wild gusts of wind echoed from the

taiga and the mountains surrounding it with dreadful groans, and I ran through the snow-drifts pursued by those groans.

But also indoors it was a terrible night for me. The gale howled round the walls with increasing fury, the taiga groaned more and more sadly. And when I sprang from my bed and wearily pressed my burning forehead to the frozen window-pane, listening to that wild voice unconsciously, I heard those groans issue from the taiga as if pursued by the fiercest gusts of the storm, and mingle in one imploring groan: "Oh, Most High, Most Holy, forgive!"

TWO PRAYERS

By ADAM SZYMAŃSKI

I.

Long ago, very long ago—or so it seems to me, for I see those days now as through a mist—for the first time in my life I heard a fine men's choir singing in unison in one of the largest churches of Podlasia. The church was filled to overflowing with a compact mass of human beings, who joined in the chants which streamed from the choir like burning lava. Loud at first, their voices passed into sobbing until they died into a low and yet lower groan, imploring and scarcely audible.

My small body shivered as with fever. I pressed my burning forehead to the cold floor and folded my hands, stretching them out to God and begging Him to quiet the sorrowful sounds which were tearing my childish heart; I prayed that those people in the choir might sing less sadly, and that they might feel brighter and happier. "Have mercy, have mercy, Lord," I repeated with so much faith and confidence that I held my breath and waited after each appeal

for the sound of a voice like thunder, which would smother the prayers and painful groans, so that the joyful Christmas hymn or the triumphant Easter "Allelujah" might flow from the choir with healing balm upon the crowd of praying people. The last sobs were hushed; the last sighs of a thousand breasts fell with a deadened echo from the high vaulting on to the bowed heads praying below, and oppressed the suppliants with a sense of universal pain. Bent to the ground, they humiliated themselves almost to extinction. I was not conscious of those many bent heads, but only of their eyes, which, fixed on the figure of Christ, were addressing a last prayer to Him.

The faintest echo of prayers and sighs was lost in the deep vaulting; dead silence—an awful silence—reigned throughout the church; it seemed as if all the prayers of a thousand faithful worshippers had been brought before a void, were dissolving into nothingness, and perishing—unheard.

The awe of such a moment is terrifying, and the soothing strains of music alone make it endurable. Those tightened lips were silent, and the bruised hearts raised no sigh; but soft tones, resembling human voices, were floating above amid the vaulting, and descended faintly through the heavy atmosphere.

The lifeless organ had become animate under

the touch of human fingers, and the crowd of worshippers, hearing their own supplications as if rising from a stronger heart than theirs, were soothed by the musician's skill. Imploring and praying with fresh confidence, they were strengthened by renewed faith, until at length tears came, and in those tears they found relief.

It seemed as if the choir had been waiting for this moment, for scarcely were the tears seen on the people's faces before it sent forth another moving entreaty, and all hearts burnt with fresh ardour.

Once again the people groaned and prostrated themselves, weighed down by the load of sighs drawn from their aching hearts.

I groaned with them. I prayed still more fervently, stretching out my hands more beseechingly to the stern God. I held my breath still longer, always expecting a visible miracle. But God was silent, and my childish hopes were shattered.

The choir led the people in a new and still more ardent prayer.

"O God, my God, when will this dreadful praying end?"

I felt my strength was failing me, and that to pray thus any longer would be impossible. I clung to my dear father, who was praying beside me, hoping he would soothe me, as was his way. But my father did not see me, although he bent

down to me, for his eyes were full of tears, and I only heard his heated whisper:

"Pray, my child; pray, dear boy, and never forget this wonderful prayer!"

So I prayed once more, concentrating all my thoughts and feelings in this one prayer. The perspiration stood in large drops on my forehead; I held my breath still longer, and waited—waited in vain! God was silent. But the choir raised a fresh entreaty.

"O God, my God, why art Thou so long in hearing us?"

It was so hot and close; a terrible sensation came over me now. My head seemed on fire; the singing of the choir, the sound of the organ, the human groans and sighs, all mingled in a chaotic whirr in my ears. This whirr passed gradually into a measured peal, commencing slowly, becoming quicker later, at first near, then farther off, resembling the flapping of a large bird's wings. The grey smoke of the incense reddened before my eyes. It flashed into my weary mind that our prayers could not reach God. I looked up and flung myself into my father's arms. There, above—it seemed to me—like birds assembling for their autumn flight, but confined by the high vaulting of the church, the human prayers were circling and clamouring. Streaks of sunlight were penetrating the narrow church windows, and all the bitter human groans and

pain and tears were beating their wings against them—pressing towards the sun.

"Father! father! let us go outside to pray—there, in the sunshine! God Almighty will hear us there, and nothing will hinder our prayers."

II.

THE winter of 18— began unusually early in X——, as in all parts of the Yakutsk district. Already by the end of August the night frosts had shrivelled and blackened foliage of every kind, depriving it of its natural beauty. The broad stretch of valley in which the town lay now looked barer than usual; only miserable yurta were to be seen, no large buildings, nothing even distantly approaching the populous villages in Poland, which are so cheerful in autumn. During that early although short autumn I was attacked for the first time by home-sickness in all its dread severity.

Halfway through November the famous "sorokowiki"[1] began, which frequently last without interruption for two months. But the malady to which I had fallen a victim had developed rapidly and completely worn me out a long while before the "sorokowiki" came. Being a novice in such matters, I did a number of things which in themselves are not unwise, and are

[1] "Sorokowiki"—58 degrees below zero.

practised by experienced men, but only to a very limited extent. All who have suffered from nostalgia carefully avoid everything which may bring about a return of the malady; they talk unwillingly of their past, are obstinately silent when their native country is mentioned, and in public show a strange, incomprehensible indifference to all that should be dear to them. Of course, this indifference is assumed. At first I did not understand this strange fact. But later on, when I had been there longer, I realized that people who were seemingly hardened and indifferent were sheltering their suffering hearts beneath a breast-plate of despair, and that they were continuing their existence in the world by a great effort. I understood that this indifference is a form of heroism—an unassuming form, it is true, as heroism shown in misery always is, but heroism nevertheless.

People of all ranks and positions cover themselves here with this shield of indifference and assumed forgetfulness, some with more consciousness of what they are actually doing, and with more perseverance, others with less. But, among the seemingly indifferent, without question those most remarkable for strength of will are the peasants. It needs a long, long time before a spark can be kindled from the deep grief of a peasant; but when the fire has broken out it burns so fiercely that a man either hides from the glare or stares in dismay.

I had struggled with this severe illness for some months already and by the time Christmas Eve came I was straining after everything that recalled home, with the unhappy perversity with which a drunkard's thoughts run on spirits, or the thoughts of a lunatic on his mania. A letter received some days beforehand enclosing the symbol of Christmas, the wafer broken into small pieces,[1] had poured oil on the fire. I had read that letter through countless times, and as I now ran to and fro in my room, like a squirrel shut up in its round cage, I was no longer thinking of the letter alone. I had drunk all the poison of memories which the past sleepless nights had called forth in feverish haste without a moment's respite, and my harassed and exhausted imagination could go no farther. The day which had awakened so many remembrances and brought me so much suffering had come. My only desire was to spend the evening in such a way as to drain the cup of treacherous sweetness to the dregs, and surround myself with an atmosphere which would revive the irrevocable past—if but for a moment and but remotely—and would suggest new and actual pictures to nourish my exhausted imagination; although these might be of the coarsest,

[1] Alluding to the universal custom in Poland at the Christmas Eve dinner. The host hands round a wafer—which has been blessed by the priest—and breaks it with the guests, and they with another, good wishes being exchanged meanwhile. It is also sent with good wishes to friends at a distance.

they would give it food for new visions, fresh hallucinations.

There were some hospitable Polish houses in X—— at the time, and Christmas was being celebrated in one or two of them. Yet I could not bring myself to go to any of them. It can easily be conjectured that on this day I wished to break away from the oppressive bonds of conventionality, and to spend Christmas Eve beyond the border-line of "society."

Imagine yourself walking in the evening, when there is a hard frost, through the empty streets of X——, and coming to the end of Cossack Street; you would then find yourself at a point whence the smaller part of the town stretches far away before you. The old mud-choked river-bed separates it just at that spot from the principal part. If the frost is very bitter, you will remain there with all the greater pleasure to enjoy the sight in front of you. A number of little lights, bright or pale, strong or flickering, are continually visible here, even through the mist of snow. In an uninhabited and desolate country the sight of any fair-sized colony is so attractive that I never once walked this way without feasting my eyes on so visible a proof of man's strength and vitality. I knew every house there: near at hand the brightly lighted houses of the richer tradesmen and officials; farther off the Cossacks' houses,

like yurta; still farther the house of the shoemaker and church clerk, and Jan Piętrzak's forge; still farther, scarcely visible through the frozen panes, the feeble little lights from the Yakut yurta; and beyond them—the end of life, a boundless snowy space.

Oh, how cold it must be there! And how forsaken, how powerless a man feels amid those plains banked up with snow, glistening with ice, darkened by gloomy taiga, and exhaling cold, cold, and only cold!

Well do I remember how I trembled and my heart beat more quickly when I stopped on the hill, as usual, some weeks before Christmas, and noticed for the first time a very small fire shining through the foggy light from the desolate space which commenced beyond the Yakut yurta. It disappeared, and showed again. Good God! was it a phantom? I could not believe my own eyes, and rubbed them once or twice. But there, remote from human dwellings, this lonely fire flickered in the distance more and more distinctly. I stood for a long while before I guessed that this solitary firelight was shining from the horrible, execrated house, the house the inhabitants of the place avoided in fear. People had died from smallpox in it some years before, and to-day any of the local townsmen would sooner die than enter it. I could not guess in the least, therefore, who had dared to light a fire there at night. A Yakut

was just passing me, so I stopped him, and, explaining what I wanted as well as I could, I asked if he knew how there came to be a fire in the old hospital. The Yakut listened attentively as long as he did not understand what I was asking. But as soon as he began to take it in he started back several steps, and when at last he thoroughtly grasped it he tore off his cap, screamed out in an inhuman voice, "Kabýs abasà!"[1] and fled terrified.

The next day I learned that the plague-stricken house was permanently inhabited by some Poles, people without a roof to shelter them and with nothing to look forward to. From time to time people whose misfortunes deprived them of other shelter also took refuge there for a short time.

In this way a small colony had formed in the desert solitude beyond the town, whose members were of two sorts, permanent and temporary. During the last few weeks I had been a frequent guest in this lonely little colony, and now, after some deliberation, I decided to spend Christmas Eve there.

I set out about five o'clock, relying on the kindness—or unkindness—of the frost, which, if it had sent out its murderous "chijus," could

[1] "Get thee behind me, Satan!" In Yakut the accent falls on the last syllable.—*Author's note.*

have completely upset my plans by driving me to the nearest acquaintance's house. But, fortunately for me, although the frost was fiendish, it was as silent as the grave. The terrible "chijus" had not yet left its Polar hiding-place, and the air was absolutely still. Thanks to this circumstance, I reached the place unharmed.

The echo of my footsteps, with the creaking snow under my boots, played sharply and shrilly round the two unheated rooms through which I was obliged to pass in order to reach the inhabited part of the house. It seemed to be even colder here than out of doors. The windows were boarded up. But although in the impenetrable darkness I hit against fragments of pots and other useless lumber at every turn, and they tumbled about or broke with a crash, though the door grated on its rusty hinges, none of the people living there even looked out or paid any attention to it. At last I came into the inhabited part of the house.

It was not much lighter in the large room than in those through which I had just passed. A thin tallow candle on a shoemaker's low bench barely lighted one corner of the room. Two people were working at the bench.

The one sitting nearer me, a tall thin man, unmistakably a born shoemaker, was knocking wooden pegs into a sole with an expert and sure hand. He had not been long in the town, but

he already had plenty of work, and would be certain not to remain long in this solitude.

The second, sitting farther off, a handsome man, was considerably shorter than Pan Józef. He was planing and polishing a heel, but slowly, without that deftness with which Pan Józef worked. One glance at the short shoemaker's face would have been enough to convince the most ardent opponent of all theories on heredity that this man had not always sat at a cobbler's bench.

As a matter of fact, Pan Jan Horodelski had once been a medical student; later . . . but what he was later could not be told in two evenings. He had now been a shoemaker for five years, and, to speak the candid truth, a drunken shoemaker. His bad habit did not allow him even to think of carrying on business for himself; he therefore wandered round to all the local workshops, using other people's tools, and finding life very hard. Each master took a large percentage for the tools, and it is probable that Pan Józef charged him no less than other masters did.

His spirit had once been proud and audacious, but life had bruised it and trodden it into the dust. Some souls emerge thence not only beautiful and noble, but even strong. Horodelski had not that strength which braves all storms, and was now a permanent inhabitant of this solitude. His days were numbered; the intellect and know-

ledge he once possessed made him now fully conscious of his condition and filled up his cup of bitterness, the depth of which was known only to himself.

It was either the seal of death on his forehead, or possibly other and deeper reasons, which gave his face its particular expression. I said before that it was the face of a very handsome man, and I ought to add that it also expressed that gentleness and tenderness which belongs essentially to feminine beauty, and that it was stamped with indescribable sadness. He varied a good deal in his behaviour; his way of expressing himself and his manners frequently betrayed the influence of the surroundings in which he had been living for long past. Frequently—though not always—he could control himself, however, and then there appeared on his face a new sign of the manhood not yet completely crushed—namely, a blush of shame at his present position.

The shoemakers, as became busy men, did not even move on their stools when I entered. I therefore took off my things and brushed away the hoar-frost in silence, and it was only when I went up nearer to them that they both raised their bent heads, welcoming me with a friendly smile. As he was holding his pegs in his teeth, Pan Józef was able to offer me his hand, dropping it again immediately with a mechanical movement, and murmuring something indistinctly.

Horodelski, after giving his greeting, looked at the heel, still unfinished, and, setting the boot on the ground, exclaimed with a sigh: "Well, that's finished!"

This was his favourite expression.

"What's finished?" I asked, however.

"Everything," came the equally stereotyped answer.

"Except the heel," Pan Józef muttered, taking the last peg from his teeth.

"It's possible the heel may get done too—that is, of course, if I don't leave this cursed ruin and go back to the church clerk," Horodelski answered quickly.

"Are you uncomfortable here, or what's up?" chaffed Pan Józef. "The Lord be praised, it's a good workshop, there are enough tools—and rooms, too; if you like, you can dance a quadrille."

But Horodelski did not listen, and continued:

"Yes, it may very possibly be that I shall give up shoemaking, if only for as long as I stay with the clerk. I shall leave it just because this shoemaker has made it as clear as day to me that I am no good at my trade, and can only be assistant to a bungling clerk."

Pan Józef tittered, highly pleased, and was just preparing to answer suitably, when a grave bass voice interrupted him.

"You may go to the clerk or not, but you'll never be a shoemaker."

The bass voice came from a dark corner of the same room. I therefore looked more attentively in that direction.

On a low plank bed, with his head bent forward, and emptying his pipe, sat a stalwart peasant, known as Bartek the Shepherd.

"Why not?" I asked, greeting the speaker.

"Why not?" Bartek answered. "Because no one can escape his destiny. A dog can't become a bitch, nor a woman a man."

"That is quite a different matter."

"So you'd think; but it's really all the same. Take me, for example. No one could say of me that I'm work-shy, yet nothing I have to do with ever comes off. And why?—Why? Because I'm not at my own work. So though I work and don't drink, I'm wasting like sheep in rough weather. I'm already more like a dog at a fair than a man,—only there's no fair. I saw that from the moment I came here. For isn't it a queer thing that a land like this, with rivers like the sea, mountains as big as the Łysia Góra at home, meadows with grass up to your middle, should have no sheep! Our shepherds are wise men; they can bewitch you and free you from spells, and have remedies for this and that; yet if you told them that in all this big country there are no sheep, they wouldn't believe you."

Bartek was a temporary inhabitant of this desert solitude. He was a very respectable man,

but a kind of fatality hung over him; he was industrious and honest, yet he had never been able to find an occupation in which he could display his qualities and draw attention to himself. He had come here not long beforehand, attracted by the promises of some emigration agents. The promises had not been fulfilled, and Bartek, taking advantage in the meantime of this shelter, was only waiting for the frosts to abate a little before setting out on his return journey. He was a grave man—in fact, almost too serious. He did not care for idle talk, and rarely started a conversation; but when he did speak, it was always laconically and with decision, brooking no contradiction. As the representative of a class which for long ages had been fairly privileged, he was an ardent Conservative, and did not admit the desirability of social reform. "A dog is a dog, and a sheep is a sheep," was his maxim. He raised the authority of his moral leaders almost to a religious cult, and it was not always safe to express an opinion before him, which even remotely reflected on the authority he acknowledged.

"Who says so?" Bartek would ask threateningly on such occasions. And when he was not too much irritated, and able to control himself, he would shake his thick fist in the speaker's face, and solemnly announce:

"Only fools talk like that!"

In the other equally large room two more permanent inhabitants of this solitude were to be found: the locksmith, Porankiewicz, and the ex-landowner, once Pan Feliks Babiński.

If Horodelski was a man standing on the edge of a precipice, Porankiewicz had rolled to the very bottom long ago. When I went into the room, he was scraping together something near the little table which he called his bench. He was pale, thin, and very small, and appeared still smaller owing to his stoop; few quite old men would walk more bent.

"Do hold yourself straight just for once," I often used to say to him.

"Hah, hah, hah!" Porankiewicz would laugh good-naturedly; "only the ground, the ground, my dear sir, will straighten me. I have sat working from morning till night since I was ten years old, and even steel gets bent at last."

This man's life was a real Odyssey—only he, poor wretch! was no Odysseus. Ill-fortune had driven him through all parts of Siberia, and it was his lot to breathe his last in the worst of them.

Babiński was asleep when I went in, but our conversation woke him, and he got up. Tall and broad-shouldered, he had a strong physique, and his dark face with large projecting eyebrows and surrounded by a beard as black as coal, always had a stern expression. I never saw him moved to tears; when something touched

him very deeply, he would only blink hard and stretch out his hand for the vodka. He was indefatigable and competent and knew how to work and had worked like an ox until two years previously, when he had begun to drink desperately. "He has either been 'overlooked' or he has a screw loose," Bartek used to say of him. So now he seemed to be lost irretrievably, although under favourable circumstances he might perhaps yet draw himself out of the abyss into which he had rolled; for he was a man of exceptionally strong character.

There are black cart-horses in Russia, called "bitiugs," which are bad-tempered, tall, and uncommonly strong. These animals walk with an even, measured step, and without the least effort. When you inquire what weight they are drawing, you will find that it is at least sixty poods, and they frequently draw a hundred.

Babiński was like a "bitiug"; he even walked with a "bitiug's" step. When he slouched along with his big strides, it was never possible to keep pace with him. He always did the shopping in the town—bread, meat, and vodka—for no one walked as quickly as he, and no one could stand frost, however severe, as he could.

He was a very hard man, and however much there might be weighing upon him, no one would have guessed it;—he was a real "bitiug." He also possessed a certain shrewdness, which often

saved him from sinking altogether. It was he who had occupied this solitary house, and was the host *de jure;* but what was still more remarkable was that he had succeeded in finding a Yakut woman, as hideous as hell, who had consented to be cook in the colony, and was as honest as only savage people can be. Eudoxia was thus the sixth soul in this lonely place.

Not all the inhabitants agreed to the festive celebration of Christmas. Bartek, and, stranger still, Horodelski, were most strongly opposed to it. "No, never!" Horodelski persisted. "I will drink as much vodka as you like, and eat what you give me—but Christmas? No!" And he only gave way after Bartek's refractoriness also had been softened by unusual eloquence on Porankiewicz's part.

The usual order of these social gatherings was that first of all Babiński rushed off without delay for provisions, and quickly returned with flour, butter, "pępki,"[1] and a large bottle of wine. Having stilled our hunger a little, and refreshed ourselves by a good glass of wine, we went out into the front room in order not to hinder the preparations which Eudoxia was making under Porankiewicz's direction. He was immensely proud of the honour shown him, and threw his head back, as he always did when trying to hold himself

[1] "Pępki"—from Russian "pupki," the salted roes of a large fish caught in the Lena.

straighter, assuming an air of extreme gravity. He was so deeply moved he was almost unable to speak, and instead of words gave indistinct grunts which, especially at first, nearly choked him. Ultimately the grunts ceased, and the sounds proceeding from the kitchen, of hissing butter, logs being split, and dough kneaded, told us that, having overcome his emotion, Porankiewicz was directing culinary affairs in his own way.

Things were now becoming noisier in the front room. Bartek and Horodelski, relaxing their restraint, were already growing boisterous. They began to recall and count up how many years it was since they had last kept Christmas Eve; and when Bartek remarked that it would be worth while " getting a little clean to sit down to such a great festivity," a public washing and changing began, as though everyone were preparing for a ball.

Pan Józef produced a very fetching collar, reaching halfway up his cheek, and ornamented his throat with a fascinating tie, made out of a checked handkerchief. Bartek pulled a small bag out of the cupboard, and, after rummaging in it for a long time, took out a threadbare piece of cheap ribbon, which he tried unsuccessfully to tie round his neck. His clumsy, unaccustomed hands quite refused to obey him, and the ribbon slipped through his fingers. But attracted by the sight of the shoemaker's tie, Bartek turned

to him with the request: "Help me with this, will you?" The shoemaker set himself to the task, yet he either undertook it carelessly or murmured something about the shabbiness of the ribbon; for only when Bartek had said in a low voice, "But it comes from home," the shoemaker answered "A-ah!" in a different tone, and, leading Bartek to the light, arranged a tie for him with which "one might dare to go courting." Bartek walked about with this as if he had swallowed a poker. Then, when Babiński also pinned on a freshly starched collar, and Horodelski sported an antiquated jacket, on which he had been working for the last half-hour to get out the stains, the external appearance of our whole party harmonized with its inner sense of festivity.

Of the whole party, I repeat; for, when the door of the next room opened wide, Porankiewicz appeared dressed equally smartly in a long, threadbare coat, and although his collar was smaller, his tie was by no means inferior to the shoemaker's.

Porankiewicz cleared his throat once or twice—indeed, he cleared it a third time. Holding the door with one hand, and waving the other towards us, he said with a solemn bow:

"Dinner is ready!"

The sight which met us on entering was so unexpected that we stood thunderstruck.

By the inner wall of the room stood a fair-sized table, covered, as it should be, with a white cloth. The hay spread on the table[1] underneath the cloth was peeping through the holes. The table was lighted with two candles in very battered candlesticks. At one end stood a large dish heaped with temptingly smoking and savoury "oładis,"[2] at the other end a dish of pępki, prepared with vinegar and pepper. Round the dish lay bread, and a bottle of wine stood near it, surrounded by small drinking vessels of various kinds. But in the very centre of the table, on the only plate—once white, now yellow and chipped—lay the fragments of the wafer which had been sent to me from home.

No one had expected either the tablecloth, the hay, or the wafer; the impression produced by so many unexpected accessories was therefore very great.

Highly pleased with the effect, Porankiewicz now went to the table and carefully took up the plate with the wafer. Straightening himself until his back almost cracked, he cleared his throat, opened his mouth, and when everyone was on tiptoe of expectation, awaiting a speech, he said in a trembling voice:

[1] The Polish custom is to spread hay under the tablecloth at the Christmas Eve dinner—an allusion to the hay in the manger.

[2] "Oładi"—a favourite Yakut dish. It is a kind of pancake, made with reindeer fat, and eaten with reindeer milk which is frozen into lumps.

"H'm-h'm! Gentlemen, the wafer comes straight from Warsaw!"

Chrysostom himself could not have spoken more powerfully.

We had been impatient to sit down to table beforehand, for the inviting smell of the oładis had begun to gain ascendancy over the solemnity of the moment. But these few words threw a dead silence round the room, and somehow we all involuntarily drew ourselves up into a row, and our five heads turned to the plate alone.

Porankiewicz straightened himself once more.

"H'm-h'm! Gentlemen, this is such a sacred——"

"Has it been blessed by the priest?" Bartek interrupted anxiously, full of joyful admiration.

"I should hope so! They would not otherwise have sent it," Porankiewicz answered, with deep conviction. "But," he continued, "h'm—I should like to say, as it is such a sacred thing, shall we not break it?"

"Let us break it! Of course we must break it!" came from five mouths as though from one.

Porankiewicz made a fresh effort to hold himself straighter.

"But since—that is—I should like to say—without offence to our dear Pan Babiński"—and

he bowed to him respectfully—" we are all hosts of this palace, I therefore hope—that is, I think—it will be best if this gentleman, who is our guest, takes it round. . . ."

As crimson and perspiring as after the hardest piece of work, he handed me the plate with a bow.

And now, when it was my own turn to speak, I understood the difficulty my predecessor had had in making his short speech. My hands trembled, and I could not utter a word. Babiński became as white as a sheet, and when I went up to him his stern face was as still as if it had been cut out of marble. Had it not been that his eyelids quivered, I might have thought that it was a corpse and not a living man before me. He was a long time in gathering the crumbs; they fell from his hands, and I doubt if he ate even one.

It was the same with all the rest.

Porankiewicz, being the softest-hearted, was the first to begin sobbing like a child; and although Bartek, who was standing beside him, kept nudging and touchingly entreating him to " be quiet, or he himself would bleat like a sheep," it was of no avail. By the time I came to Bartek, his strength was failing; he bent his grey head low, and, stretching out his hand for the wafer, he slowly began aloud: " In the Name of the Father . . . and of the Son . . . and of the

Holy Ghost. . . . And of the Holy Ghost," he repeated lower, and burst out crying in a loud voice.

Tears brought relief to us all—to all but Babiński, who, instead of weeping with us, stood as though petrified, merely blinking his eyes. We could see that he was touched to the quick. For, standing near the table, he stretched out both hands among the cups and glasses standing round the wine-bottle, and clinked a glass loudly. His eyelids quivered and his hands trembled as in fever, refusing to obey him; and when Porankiewicz, who was calm again, ran up to him, he only whispered in a weak voice:

"Pour it out, brother."

Porankiewicz began to pour, and every hand was stretched out towards the table.

It was, of course, impossible for all to pour at once. But as we all found we needed something to drink, we reproached one another for not having thought of filling the glasses earlier. This, however, Bartek cut short by sagely observing that "nobody here was the Holy Ghost, and could know that so much sorrow would fall upon all of us." When at last all the cups and glasses had been filled, we emptied them in silence, fearing a fresh outburst of emotion, and proceeded in turn to the peppered and salted pępki course. This is food of the kind which cannot be eaten

without being suitably moistened. So when Porankiewicz repeatedly took up the bottle, all hands were again stretched towards him. And then we noticed that Babiński's hand was not among the rest.

Babiński stood in the same attitude as before, with his empty glass, silent, immovable, and pale. Bartek, who had experience of sick people, was the first to perceive his danger, and, going up to him at once, examined him anxiously.

"It's clear it has got hold of him all at once," was his final verdict. "If it has no outlet, it may strangle him, just as a savage wolf kills a lamb. There's only one way to prevent it: if sorrow doesn't come out with tears through the eyes, you must let it flow down gently inside, and as it slowly runs off, the pressure leaves the heart. He ought to have drunk out three glasses at once. But it's not so bad yet; he's a strong man; he'll come to himself after a bit."

And, choosing the grandest cup, Bartek ordered: "Fill it, Porankiewicz!"

Porankiewicz filled it, and Babiński drained it mechanically; again he filled it, and again Babiński drained it. But the pain having evidently not abated, Bartek began to examine him afresh.

"Haven't you got some spirits somewhere, by chance?"

Babiński nodded in assent; and when the vodka

had been brought, Bartek chose an ordinary glass from among the other drinking vessels, filled it well to the half, and offered it to Babiński.

The remedy worked wonders. Babiński sipped it, but when he had drained the glass the pallor left his face, and he sat down to the table and asked for something to eat. He was offered some pępki, and when we had all had visible proof that it was disappearing with due rapidity, a heavy weight fell from our minds. Bartek was now no less proud of his remedy than Porankiewicz of his Christmas Eve dinner, and each began to call the other to testify to his excellence. So when Babiński had consumed two pounds of pępki, and stopped eating, the first critical episode of the evening was safely over.

There was now a buzzing in the solitude, as of a swarm of bees; everyone talked, and, although it appeared to each that he spoke in his natural voice, there was enough noise for twelve.

We were all filled with the happiness for which we had yearned, and our hearts were so softened that recent troubles, long-forgotten pain, and wounds which each had concealed from the world more closely than even a miser conceals his chest filled with ducats were opened to receive the balm of comfort. Phantoms of manifold suffering passed before us in a long unending chain, showing us all forms of human misery, as though through a kaleidoscope.

Having now experienced the relief we longed for, and seeing the faces round us wet with tears of sympathy, we each spontaneously acknowledged our failings and sins, making our confession in public, as it were, and expressing sincere penitence for our misdeeds.

Bartek beat his breast, accusing himself of very great weakness; Porankiewicz sobbed, piteously begging to be pardoned for his bad habit on account of the difficulties he had gone through, which had been beyond his strength; the others also accused themselves.

Only after each had shown penitence and regret, and full pardon for the failings by which every one had been overcome on his thorny road had restored our lost dignity, the yellow, wrinkled faces brightened with sincere and childlike joy, and we dared to look up. Now we were all on an equality. The second episode, no less critical than the first, had passed safely.

It gave way to the third episode.

The harmony reigning amongst us, the happy feeling of mutual love, brotherhood, and sympathy, began to thrill us with delight, and foretold the longed-for moment.

Like birds flying to the fire on a dark night, the people inexperienced in the life here fling themselves upon that deadly hashish. But the experienced flee from the cup of sweetness which

had so often ensnared and deluded us by its bewitching draught. They fly from it as from the phantom of death. That cup now stood unveiled before us. One after the other the coverings hiding the tempting poison had fallen away; there was nothing left but to approach and drink—to drink till strength was utterly exhausted.

The first to recall the delightful recollections of home was old Bartek, who unrolled on a golden background pictures of his native Sandomierz fields, pictures full of strength, simplicity, and charm. With dishevelled hair, with face aflame, and the inspired look of an old Biblical prophet, he showed us the most beautiful plains, meadows, and forests, of his native soil. He led us to hamlets with rustic thatched roofs; he grieved over the misery sheltering beneath them; he led us to the churches where the Name of God is hallowed.

And the longed-for miracle took place; the goal of hidden desires, dreamt of when watching through sleepless nights, was realized. Our distant country, our native air, the golden sun, were with us here in this dark room in the solitude. We saw that country, felt and touched it; we were here, yet living there; far away from it, we decked it with verdure, we adorned it with flowers, we decorated it with the most beautiful of decorations, with our hearts beating alone for our country—our bride to whom we would be faithful while strength lasted.

Is this no exertion? Indeed, may God preserve everyone from such an exertion! Strong men have tried to lift that stone of Sisyphus, and to-day their bones whiten the cemeteries. A few drunkards, tramping from tavern to tavern, a throng of madmen, breathing their last in hospitals, are testimonies to the fact that this stone shall not be lifted; for the higher a man is fool enough to lift it, with the greater force will it crush his frenzied head.

A frenzy had seized us all, and with bloodshot eyes, distended nostrils, and hearts ready to burst from our anguished breasts, we undertook this superhuman task.

Then woe to the bold man who would have dared to handle our illusions rudely! Woe to the unhappy one whose strength gave out too soon! Ere he could recollect himself, a knife, brandished by an otherwise friendly hand, would have flashed before his eyes. The unhappy man would have perished as the weaker wild animals perish without mercy among an enraged herd.

A choir composed of six voices resounded with a deep echo round the large rooms of the solitary house. Sad and joyful songs alternated naturally in the same unchangeable order in which everything is carried out in this world. A native of the Cracow district, Bartek with his Cracowiaks[1]

[1] Country dances interspersed with songs.

was a host in himself. "We're not such bad fellows"[1] alone would have satisfied the most ardent vocal enthusiast, we sang it so many times. For it was not five or ten, but rather twenty years or even more, since many of us had heard that little song. So, although Bartek was already hoarse, to everyone's delight he sang it again for the fifth time, repeating the second verse, which is the more beautiful, six or seven times. Each word of that song, so charmingly and poetically naïve, called forth indescribable enthusiasm.

"Ay, ay, what a song! That is a song!" the brief applause burst out; and although Bartek sang on without interruption, glancing round triumphantly, he found time to answer each exclamation briefly but distinctly:

"That's a Cracowian song!"

Babiński followed the melody of each ballad or song, and rattled it out like a barrel organ, merely repeating two very discordant syllables innumerable times: "Dyna, dyna, dyna, dyna." He sang with the greatest enthusiasm, however; strong as he always was and burning with inward fire, he was terrible now with his wordless songs, into which he put all the sufferings and sorrows he had never expressed in words.

At last we had exhausted all the songs we knew, and sung them to the end; no one could recall any more. But since the frenzy which had

[1] A well-known Cracowiak.

seized us had now reached its height, it was necessary to find some new song giving ample outlet by its words and motifs to the emotions already aroused, and answering to our present state of feeling.

Among the songs of our nation which give an outlet to its longings, the greatest are the religious songs; for whether sad or joyous, mournful or festive, they are always noble in their deep and calm feeling. The people who can hear and find nothing in these songs are poor indeed. The Lenten, Easter, and Christmas songs are the greatest artistic inheritance handed down to us from the past. It is the one sphere of artistic creativeness not produced by separate epochs and classes, but to wihch the whole nation has contributed throughout the centuries of its existence, giving to it all its earthly joys and griefs —all its soul.

And therefore we possess a treasury of melodies which are as deep as the soul of the nation—indifferent to superficial or cheap sentiment—and as great as existence itself, obscured by the veil of ages.

Cast into this depth any amount of the blackest sorrow or the most exuberant joy, its surface will never even be ruffled. It replies to the greatest cataclysms with a ripple, and its smooth current scarcely even suggests any troubling of its waters.

From this treasury, as yet insufficiently prized, the great artists of the future will draw inspiration, as those in real suffering do to-day.

Who does not know the favourite carol, "Star of the Sea"? Yet it is probably sung in few churches as we sang it there. Both words and melody corresponded to our feelings. The simple words of the song might have been written for us; its solemn, grand melody soothed our hearts, which were suffering so terribly from self-inflicted wounds. Bartek was the first to fall on his knees. The rest of us followed his example, and earnest, ardent prayers flowed from our lips. But when we came to the words, "Turn from us hunger and grievous plague, protect us from bloodshed and war," we prayed with so much fervour that hearing we did not hear, and seeing we did not see Bartek rise weeping. "Oh, the merciful Father won't hear such a great prayer from this den of infection! We must pray to the God of the heavens in the open!" he cried, and went out of the room dressed as he was.

But our strength was now nearly exhausted. Even Babiński stopped singing now and then, showing only by his open mouth and hand beating time that he was still singing on in his heart. Suddenly, electrifying us afresh, a strong voice sounded outside the door: "God is born, power trembles"; and Bartek, led in by Eudoxia from

the "open," in which he would infallibly have been frozen, started the carol in his bass voice.

Another spring, not struck as yet, gushed out before us. Was it possible we could have forgotten this? So, although our lips could scarcely move, we drank eagerly from this fresh source, and our choir sang a fresh song in unison with strength refreshed. The joyful song of the Birth of our Lord bore us far away again from the Yakut country, and kindled our hearts with new fire, the fire of truth, confidence, and hope.

We prayed long and fervently. Even Eudoxia, attracted by our praying, came in carrying a holy eikon, and bowing before it, repeated imploringly:

"Tangara! Aj, Tangara! Aj, Tangara, urùj!"[1]

[1] "God, great God, have mercy!"

THE TRIAL

By WŁADYSŁAW REYMONT

The door opened suddenly with a bang, letting the wind into the room, and a silent, sinister crowd of peasants began to pour in from the dark hall. They did not even say, "The Lord be praised!"[1]

The miller dropped his spoon on the table, and looked round in astonishment from one to the other. Then he turned down the lamp which was flaring from the draught.

"There are rather a lot of you," he muttered.

"There are more waiting outside," Jędrzej, one of the peasants, said, coming forward quickly.

"Have you any business to settle with me?"

"We didn't come here just for a talk," someone said, shutting the door.

"Then sit down; I shall have finished supper in a minute."

"To your good health! We will wait a while. . . ."

The miller began to sip up his porridge hastily. The peasants meanwhile settled themselves on

[1] The greeting usual among peasants.

the benches round the stove, warming their backs and carefully watching Jędrzej, who had sat down by the table and was leaning his elbows on it in deep reflection.

"Beastly weather this!" the miller accosted them.

"Real March weather."

"It's always like this before the spring."

Here the conversation broke off again, and the only thing to be heard in the silence of the room was the miller's spoon scraping along the earthenware bowl. But outside someone was stamping the mud off his boots, while at times the howling gusts of wind struck the walls till they creaked, and the rain beat against the steamed window-panes.

"Jadwiś!" called the miller, wiping his short moustache with his hand.

A strong and very good-looking girl, not wearing a peasant's dress, appeared from a side room. She threw a keen glance at the peasants, and, taking the bowl in her arm, went out again with a rolling gait.

"What is this business?" began the miller, taking snuff.

Not a hand was stretched out towards the snuff; the peasants' faces had suddenly clouded. Someone cleared his throat, others scratched their heads in indecision, and they all looked at Jędrzej, who, straightening himself and fixing

his light, searching eyes on the miller, said slowly:

"We have come to make you tell us who the thieves were."

The miller started back, stared, spread out his arms, and stuttered: "In the Name of the Father and the Son! How should I know that? . . ."

"We think you are the man to know," Jędrzej said in a lower voice, standing up. The other peasants also got up, and planted themselves round the miller in a circle, like a thick wall, fixing him with eyes as keen as a hawk's, so that the blood mounted to his face. "We have come to you for the truth," Jędrzej whispered impressively.

"And you must tell us—you've got to!" the rest echoed in low, stern voices.

"What truth? Are you mad? How am I to know? Am I a party to thieves? Or what? . . ." He spoke quickly, turning the light up and down with trembling hands.

"We know very well that you're honest; but you know who the thieves are. So come, how was it? They stole your horses in the autumn, but you did nothing; and not long ago they stole money from you—you even caught them in your bedroom—and again you did nothing and didn't have them taken up, and never even told the policeman about them."

"Why should I? Do you want me to lose

more money? What good would the Court or the police do? They'd catch the wind in the field and bring it bound to me! May God repay those scoundrels at the Judgment Day for the wrong they have done me!"

"It's plain, from all you say, that you're afraid to let out who they are."

"If I knew, do you think I'd be the worse off through them, and not tell? Was it for nothing . . ."

"You keep going round in a circle," Jędrzej interrupted him roughly. "We didn't come here to quarrel with you, but to get at the truth; and we're in a hurry, for the whole village is waiting, some outside your house and some in the cottages. So we ask you as a friend to tell us who stole your money."

"If I had known it myself, the Court and all the village would have known by now," the miller excused himself anxiously, looking in alarm at the set, suspicious faces round him. But Jędrzej threw himself forward impatiently, and his eyes shone with anger. Without thinking what he was doing, he took the miller by the shoulder, and said abruptly in a firm voice:

"What you are saying isn't true! But if you will swear to it in church, we will trust you and leave you in peace."

The miller sat down and began to talk with feigned amusement:

"Ha, ha! You're in a larky mood, I see, as if it were Carnival. Of course, if you all go in a crowd to a fellow and threaten him with sticks, he'll be ready to swear to anything you like. I tell you the truth: I know nothing about this, and I know nothing about the thieves. You can believe me if you like; if not, then don't. But you won't force me to swear to it, for you have no right to try me. . . ."

He stood up, rolling his eyes defiantly.

"Indeed, that's what we came for—and to carry out the sentence justly," Jędrzej said so firmly that the miller started back in terror, and was unable to get out a word.

The peasants surrounded him in gloomy silence, fixing their burning eyes on him, and shuffling their feet impatiently. So menacing and full of stern resolution did they look that he was at a loss to know what to do, and merely stood wiping the perspiration from his bald head and casting frightened glances round the circle of stubborn, set faces. He realized that this was not only idle talk, but the beginning of something terrible. He sat down again on a bench, and took pinch after pinch of snuff to help himself to arrive at some decision. Then Jędrzej went up to him, and said solemnly:

"You neither want to tell the truth nor to swear to it. So it's plain you are a party to those thieves!"

The miller sprang up as hastily as if something close beside him had been struck by lightning, upsetting the bench as he did so.

"Jesus! Mary! have I to do with thieves? You say this to me?"

"I say it and repeat it!"

"And we repeat it too!" they all shouted together, shaking their fists at him. Their heads were bent forward; their glances were like vultures' beaks, ready to tear.

Attracted by the noise, Jadwiś burst into the room and stood petrified.

"What's up here?" she asked anxiously.

The peasants dropped their clenched hands, and began to clear their throats.

"We don't want women here, listening and blabbing it all out afterwards," someone said angrily.

"She'd better go back where she came from."

"Look after the geese, and don't come poking your nose into men's business!" they shouted still louder. Jadwiś ran out of the room in a furious temper, slamming the door after her.

Again Jędrzej stretched his hand forward, and said:

"I tell you, miller, the time for trial and punishment has come!"

"And for bringing order into the world! . . ."

"And for weeding out wrong and planting justice! . . ." The words rang out menacingly,

and again the peasants shook their clenched fists in the miller's frightened face.

"Good God! what do you fellows want? What am I guilty of?" he gasped, terrified, looking round from side to side. But, without heeding him, Jędrzej began to speak quickly and in a low, hard voice which penetrated the miller like frost.

"As he won't confess, he is guilty. Take him, and we will try him at the church. . . . Everyone who wrongs the people will be brought to a just trial, and be heavily sentenced. Take him, you fellows!"

"Jesus! Mary! Men! . . ." the miller stammered in deadly fear, looking round distractedly, for the peasants all advanced towards him together. "Men! . . . How can I tell you? . . . I have sworn to it. They'll burn the house down or kill me if I say who they are. . . . Merciful Jesu! Let me be! I'll tell you everything! I'll tell you!" His voice quavered, for several hands had already seized him and were dragging him towards the door.

It was some time before he was able to speak. He fell panting on the table. They stood round him, and someone gave him a little water to drink, while others said in a friendly way:

"Don't be afraid; no one who is on the side of the people will have a hair on his head touched."

"Only confess the whole truth."

"We know you're an honest man, and will tell us the scoundrels' names."

The miller writhed inwardly, like an eel when it is trodden upon; he went hot and cold, and became alternately pale and red. Suddenly he drew himself up, ready for anything. But before he began to speak he glanced into the next room.

There was a glimpse of Jadwiś, as though she were just jumping away from behind the door. He looked out of the window, and then, standing up before the group of peasants, he crossed himself and said:

"I am telling you the truth as though I were at Confession; it was the two Gajdas and the Starszy."[1]

There was silence. The men stood petrified and stared at one another, panting and drawing long, hoarse breaths. Jędrzej was the first to speak:

"That's what we were thinking, but we couldn't be sure. Now we know what we want to know. We know them, the filthy scoundrels!" He banged his fist on the table. "They are weeds that must be torn up by the roots so that they mayn't spread. Both the Gajdas—father and son? And the Starszy is the third? Then, in God's Name, we'll go to them, and you'll go with us, miller, so that you may tell them the truth to their face."

"I'll go and tell them—that I will! It's as

[1] The colloquial name for policeman.

if a weight had fallen from my shoulders. I'll stand up and tell them they're robbers and thieves. Good God! I knew what they were up to, but I daren't breathe a word about it. May they be broken upon the wheel for my sin in being such a coward! I was ashamed to look people in the face when everyone was calling out about those robberies. . . . The rascals! they took away my horses; I sent them the ransom through the Starszy, but they didn't give them back. . . . And afterwards I caught them in my bedroom: they fleeced me of every penny, and they threatened me with their knives. . . . As if that weren't enough, I had to swear I'd not let out who'd done it!"

"The whole neighbourhood has suffered through them."

"They have stolen a great many horses and cows from people, and a lot of money."

"It was easy for them to do all that, for the Starszy gave them the go-by, and went shares with them. . . ."

"They had a gay time at our expense; let them pay for it now. . . ."

"If everyone talks, I'll have my say, too," someone exclaimed. "I know that the Gajdas betrayed the priest for having married the young couple from Podlasia."[1]

[1] The Uniats are forbidden by the Russian Government to be baptized, married, etc., by their own or Roman Catholic priests.

"What! . . . They even betrayed the priest?"

"And the postmaster's daughters who taught the children[1]—it must have been they who betrayed them?"

"So it was! So it was! We know that!" the miller asserted rancorously.

"Then it's they who robbed and killed the Jews in the forest!"

"Sure enough, it's the Gajdas! It's they! . . . The carrion! . . . The mean wretches! The scoundrels!" The peasants began to curse, thumping their sticks on the ground and stamping. Their eyes shot fire, and they raised their clenched fists.

"Let's have done with them! Punish those swine! Try them! Try them!"

"Then let's go quickly before they escape us!" Jędrzej cried.

"Skin them! . . . Batter them to death like mad dogs!" they shouted, pressing through the doorway. The miller blew out the light and went with them.

They were no sooner outside the house than Jadwiś ran out. She glided stealthily along the wall, looking anxiously after them and wondering wherever they could be going on a night like that, and what their reason for going could be.

For it was a real March night, cold, wet, and

[1] Children are only allowed to attend specially licensed schools—one of the measures taken by the Russian Government to prevent Polish subjects from being taught.

windy. The whole world was wrapped in thick darkness. The sleet lashed the men's faces and took away their breath, and the damp cold penetrated them to the marrow; the wind swept through the orchards from all sides; the snowy ridges of the fields alone showed white in the blackness. But, without noticing the wretched weather, the peasants walked along briskly, spurting the mud from under their feet. They went stealthily one after the other past the low cottages which sat along the highroad like tired old market women taking a rest, or nestled in their orchards so that only the snowy roofs, resembling white hoods, could be seen through the swaying trees.

Jędrzej walked in front. Every now and then he gave orders in a low voice, and someone left the line, ran up to a window, and, hammering at it with his fist, cried:

"Come out! It's time!"

The light in the cottage would be extinguished at once, and the door would creak. Black shadows, feeling their way with sticks, would creep out and join the crowd in silence.

They now walked still closer together and with even greater caution, looking carefully in all directions.

Suddenly Jędrzej looked back nervously; he had distinctly heard the mud splash as if someone were running after them, and there was a shadow

creeping along stealthily under the hedge. But directly the peasants stopped all was quiet and there was nothing to be seen; the only sounds were the roar of the wind, and now and again the dogs barking furiously in their kennels.

They moved on more slowly, but several now began to cross themselves in terror; some sighed, while others felt a cold shudder go through them. Yet no one said a word or hesitated; they went forward with a steady movement like an oncoming, threatening cloud drawing together slowly and silently before it suddenly flashes with lightning and scatters hail on the ground.

They passed the public-house, which was brilliantly lighted; some of them sniffed in the familiar smell, and would have liked to have gone inside to have a drink. This, however, Jędrzej would not allow. He made them draw up into the middle of the road, for they had now nearly reached the policeman's house; its white walls shone in the distance. The lively strains of a concertina came through the brightly lighted windows.

The peasants stopped opposite the house, and scarcely dared to breathe.

"Now keep a good look-out," Jędrzej said, "and the minute the bell rings, go into the room all together and get him by the head, and a rope round him. But be careful he doesn't give you the slip, or else he'll do a lot of harm. . . . Don't make a noise and scare him away."

Several peasants silently left the crowd and crept up to the house in the darkness. In the meantime the others marched on quickly towards the large square at the end of the village, where only a few little lights were shining. The space between these last houses and the snowy fields was filled by the church and a thicket of trees which looked like a black mountain rocking slightly in the breeze.

The Gajdas' house stood near the church, a little way from the road, and was partly hidden by a large orchard, so that the lights from the windows showed through the close branches like wolves' eyes. The men turned towards it at once, but in places the mud was knee-deep, for the puddles had become like pools, and frozen snow-drifts blocked the road. They went carefully step by step to avoid the obstructions, and made a circle as though intentionally prolonging the way. Near the fence they halted for an instant; Jędrzej bade them keep silence, stole to the side of the window, and peeped in.

The room was large; the whitewashed walls were hung with pictures, and lighted by a lamp suspended from the ceiling. Several people were sitting at the table under the lamp, having supper, and talking together in low voices. The bright fire crackling on the hearth threw red gleams over one side of the room. A girl was walking up and down, nursing a screaming baby.

"They're at home—they're in there!" Jędrzej whispered, turning to the crowd. He was trembling all over, and almost unable to breathe or to speak and tell half the men to go and watch the house from the backyard and fields.

But, quickly composing himself, he led the rest boldly through the gate up to the house. They had already reached it, when the dogs began to howl so dismally somewhere in the backyard that they hesitated for a moment.

"That's our lot has come upon the dogs. Come on! If they put up a fight in there, knock them down with your sticks, the swine!—No pity!" Jędrzej whispered. Dragging the miller after him and crossing himself, he walked sharply into the hall, the other peasants close behind him, shoulder to shoulder. They entered the room in a body, looking black and determined.

There was some commotion. The Gajdas jumped up from the table, their mouths open with amazement. But the elder one recovered his presence of mind in a trice, and, dropping on to a stool, he pulled his son by the sleeve to make him sit down too.

"Glad to see you!" he cried with ironical friendliness. "Ha, ha! What grand guests! Even the miller and Jędrzej! Quite a party!"

"Sit down, neighbours!" the young Gajda put in, throwing frightened glances round the peasants, and mechanically dipping his spoon into the dish.

But no one sat down, and not a hand was stretched out in greeting. They all stood as still as posts, and Jędrzej alone came forward, saying sternly:

"Stop eating; we have more important business in hand."

"Business? Supper is more important to us!" the old man snapped insolently.

"I tell you: stop! So stop!" Jędrzej thundered.

"Hah! You are very domineering in a strange cottage!"

"I command, and you must obey, you dirty dogs!"

The Gajdas jumped to their feet, pale and shaking with fear. But they clenched their teeth and looked as fierce as wolves, ready for anything.

"What do you want?" the younger man asked, choking with fury.

"To try you and punish you—you robbers!" Jędrzej cried in a terrible voice. It was as if the ceiling were falling on them, for they cowered under these words.

Death seemed to sweep through the silence which followed, for even breathing ceased for a moment; only the baby began to cry louder than before. Suddenly the Gajdas sprang towards the door, the younger brandishing his knife, the older man snatching up his axe; but before they could strike, the peasants had thrown themselves upon them, and in the scuffle which

followed blows from sticks rained down upon them, a score of hands grasped them by the head, neck, and legs, and they were lifted bodily from the ground, like fragile plants.

The storm went round the room; there were cries and confusion; tables, benches, and chairs flew in all directions; the women sobbed; with curses and shouts, a convulsed mass of men rolled on to the floor, hit against the wall several times, and finally fell asunder.

At length the Gajdas lay on the ground, bound with ropes, like sheep, and shouting at the top of their voices. They cursed horribly as they struggled to free themselves.

"Take them to the church door; they shall be tried there!" Jędrzej ordered.

They dragged them out of the house and almost along the ground across the square, driving them on with sticks, for they resisted, yelling with all their might. The women ran by their side, sobbing and whining for pity; the men kicked them away as if they were so many bitches. "Peal the church bell! Let all the village come together!" the miller cried.

The landscape was lighted by the snow which had begun to fall heavily.

The bell rang out with a deep sound, like a fire-alarm, and then went on pealing without ceasing, mournfully and ominously, so that the crows flew up cawing from the belfry and circled over

the church. From the village came a crowd of women and children, running and shouting.

" Men ! Have pity ! Help ! For Heaven's sake !" the Gajdas shouted, trying desperately to free themselves. But no one answered; the whole crowd went on in deep silence. Thus they entered the churchyard, took their prisoners up to the church door, and threw them down there.

" What are we guilty of ? What do you mean ? Help !" the Gajdas shouted once more, making an effort to get up. But someone gave them a kick, and they fell down again like logs, cursing and vowing dreadful vengeance on the whole village.

Standing with his back against the church door, Jędrzej took off his cap and cried in a loud, solemn voice:

" Brothers ! Poles !"

The women's screaming was hushed, and the crowd drew into a close circle, straining to listen, for the wet snow, which was falling thickly, made hearing difficult.

" I tell you this, brothers: just as the peasant goes out with his harrow in the spring to rake his field which he ploughed in the autumn, that it may be free from weeds before he puts in good seed, so now the time has come to weed out the wrong in the world. . . . They have already done this in other districts and parishes; they have turned out the District Clerk at Olsza, they have

killed the thieves at Wola, and driven away others from Grabica. And the people have taken this upon themselves—upon themselves; for things in this world are so badly managed that we peasants have to work and sweat, pay rates, and send up recruits. But if any of us has a grievance, there is only God and useless grumbling left him."

"Ay, that's it—that's it!"

"This I tell you: the time has come for us peasant people not to look for help to anyone else, but to rely on ourselves. We must manage for ourselves; we must defend ourselves from being ill-treated, and take the law into our own hands! We have waited for long years, and had to put up with all kinds of wrongs done to us, and no one has come to the rescue or helped us in any way. For the Courts are not for those who want justice; the laws are not for peasants; and there's no protection for those who have been wronged. Everyone with any sense knows that. So there seems to be no other way but do as other villages are doing."

"Kill the carrion! Finish them off! Tear them with wild horses!" they began to shout frantically at once, attacking the Gajdas with their sticks.

"Silence! Stop there, you fools!" Jędrzej roared, putting himself in front of the Gajdas to protect them. "Wait! We all know they are robbers, thieves, and traitors who deserve punishment; but first let everyone who has any-

thing to charge them with come forward and say it to their face. For we have come here to sentence and not to murder them. We don't want to play off our revenge on them, but to punish them justly."

The people crowded together more closely, for everyone felt awkward at being the first to come forward. There was a loud hubbub of voices as they recalled their grievances and pressed with threats towards the prisoners. At last the miller stepped forward, and, raising his hand, said solemnly:

"I swear before God and men that they stole my horses and four hundred roubles. I caught them in the act. . . . At the point of the knife they forced me to swear that I would not give them away. They threatened me with revenge if I did. They are robbers of the worst sort."

"And I swear that the Gajdas stole my cow," said another man.

"And they took my sow."

"And my mare and foal," others deposed.

The assembled people listened in grim silence.

The snow suddenly ceased to fall and the wind increased, beating round the church and tearing at the swaying, moaning trees; large grey clouds flew across the sky; but the steady voices continued their accusations uninterruptedly. At intervals there was an ominous murmur and the thumping of sticks, or else the Gajdas cried:

"That's not true! They're giving wrong evidence! The thieves from Wola did all that! Don't believe it!"

But fresh people came forward, accusing them of still heavier crimes.

And finally they reproached them with the murder of the Jews and with betraying the postmaster's daughters and the priest, with committing arson, joining in drinking bouts with the police, and not going to church: any known misdemeanour was hastily raked up and thrown furiously at their miserable heads. There was a great clamour, for each man tried to shout down the other, everyone cursed and swore to avenge himself, and was so eager to beat the Gajdas that Jędrzej, unable to restrain them all, shouted angrily:

"Hold your noise, and let me have a say!"

The hubbub subsided slightly, and only the women continued their quarrelsome chattering.

"Do you plead guilty?" he asked, bending over them.

"No! We're wrongly charged! They are lying—that's all their spite! We swear to it!" they cried in despair.

"If you plead guilty, you will get a lighter sentence," he urged them, relenting a little.

The miller, Jędrzej, and those few who were less excited, still tried to protect them from the enraged crowd, which moved on towards them

like a storm, shouting and flourishing sticks. But the women managed to jump at them and scratch them spitefully.

The scene at the church door became more terrible every instant.

"We must have the priest here before we finish with them! . . . The priest!" the miller cried suddenly.

The people stopped. Someone ran to fetch the Vicar.

"Or shall we put off carrying out the sentence till to-morrow?" the miller proposed.

Thumping their sticks together, the crowd shouted:

"Let's have done with them! . . . No need for such scoundrels to have a priest! . . . Let them die like dogs! No delay, or else they'll run and fetch the Cossacks! Kill them off!"

But the Gajdas, feeling that this brought a possibility of rescue, began to implore despairingly:

"Men, have pity! Send the priest; we want to make our confession! The priest! . . ."

Unfortunately for them, the priest was not at home. He had gone away somewhere the previous evening.

"Then let them make their confession before all the people," someone said.

"Very good! Yes, let them confess—and tell the truth!" the rest assented.

Someone cut the ropes binding their hands, and set them on their knees before the church door.

"Open the church! They are going to make their confession! Open it!" shouted many voices.

But Jędrzej exclaimed: "No need of that! It's a sin to bring such scoundrels into the house of God; it's enough that we allow them to come on to consecrated ground. Quiet there!" he called to the dissatisfied women who kept on talking; and, bending over the Gajdas, he said:

"Now confess; but only say the plain truth. The people have power to forgive you your trespasses." He knelt down beside them, and all the rest followed his example, sighing and crossing themselves.

The Gajdas mumbled something, looking round meanwhile in all directions.

"Speak up! Louder! They even want to cheat God!" the crowd shouted indignantly.

The elder Gajda, who seemed to have lost heart completely, began to shiver, and burst out crying, confessing his sins through heavy sobs.

A dead silence spread through the crowd; no one dared to breathe, or even cough; that pitiful voice, spreading through the darkness like a pool of blood, was the only sound besides the bell pealing overhead and the soughing trees.

The people were awestruck, and their flesh began to creep. They beat their breasts in terror; here and there a moan broke from them; an icy

fear penetrated them, for Gajda, while all the time throwing the blame on his son and the policeman, not only pleaded guilty to what he was accused of, but to many other even worse crimes. . . .

When he had finished he prostrated himself with outstretched arms, striking his head on the threshold of the church door. His entreaties for mercy were so piteous that many people in the crowd began to cry also.

"Now let Kacper confess!" the men howled. "Kacper! Get on, you blackguard! Be quick!" They began to beat and kick him, till he raised himself, exclaiming furiously:

"You're blackguards yourselves! You want to murder innocent people! You're thieves and traitors yourselves!"

He cursed and threatened them dreadfully, till the old man begged him to stop.

"You'd better knuckle under, son. Confess; then perhaps they'll pardon you. Knuckle under! . . ."

"I won't! I won't beg for mercy from blackguards! Dogs! Damned scoundrels! Carrion! I've no need to confess myself. Let them kill me—the swine! Only let them dare to do it! The Cossacks will give it them back for me to-morrow. Only let them touch me!"

He roared this like a wild beast, and, suddenly springing to his feet and belabouring the nearest bystanders with his fists, he began to beat his way

madly through the crowd. The old man slipped after him like a wolf. There was a fearful outcry, but the Gajdas were instantly overpowered and thrown down, like a bundle of rags, where they had lain before.

"They are trying to run away!" Jędrzej shouted angrily. "They are threatening vengeance! Punish them, you fellows! Beat them to death like mad dogs! Let everyone have a go at them—everyone—whoever believes in God!"

The crowd swayed like a forest, and flung itself upon the men; a hundred sticks rose and fell with a hollow crash, and the air was rent with a terrific roar as though the whole world were breaking to pieces. It was like a whirlwind raging and then suddenly subsiding. Only curses and women's shrieks and the thud of sticks were heard in the darkness now, while at moments wild, piercing cries rang out from the men who were being murdered.

And a few minutes later there was nothing at the church door but a black shapeless mass pounded into the slush; it gave out a sickly smell of blood.

The bell ceased. But the men had not yet had time to get their breath before the news spread from the village that the policeman had escaped. The peasants came running one after the other, talking and shouting:

"The policeman has made off! We went into

his room when the bell began to ring, and he had gone."

"He escaped through the larder. The miller's daughter had warned him."

"Of course; we saw her go in! She gave him the tip. It was she!"

"That's a lie!" the miller bawled, springing towards them and threatening them with his fists.

"We all know that she got herself into trouble with the policeman—all of us!" the women cried; and everyone suddenly knew something about the matter, and put in his word.

Then Jędrzej began to speak again: "You people, listen! Brothers! We have punished only these; but the biggest thief has run away. We must catch him. . . . For that is how we will punish everyone who does wrong to the people, steals, and is a traitor. Jump on your horses and hunt him down! Quick! Get on your horses, you fellows! He has made off to the town; catch him! Alive or dead, we must get him! Hurry up there, or else he may play us a dirty trick! Look sharp!"

They poured out of the churchyard and ran hurriedly towards the village. In no time a number of peasants were tearing towards the town at full speed, their horses scattering the mud from under their feet.

The village became almost deserted, except

for a few women in the churchyard, who were crying bitterly.

Keeping to the middle of the road, and heedless of the sleet beating into his face, the miller dragged himself homewards. He breathed with difficulty, and often paused, sighing heavily. At times he staggered, at times he stopped short, as though petrified; and now and then a low, pained whisper broke from the depth of his tortured heart.

"You—my daughter! So that's what you are!—With the policeman!" he repeated involuntarily.

And he clenched his fist in his bitterness; but he was trembling as in a fever, and heavy tears rolled fast down his face.

THE STRONGER SEX

By STEFAN ŻEROMSKI

Dr. Paweł Obarecki returned home in rather a bad temper from a whist-party, where he had been paying his respects to the priest, in company with the chemist, the postmaster and the magistrate, for sixteen successive hours, beginning the previous evening. He carefully locked the door of his study so that no one, not even his housekeeper, aged twenty-four, should disturb him. He sat down at the table, glared angrily at the window without knowing why, and drummed on the table with his fingers. He realized that he was in for another fit of his "metaphysics."

It is a well-established fact that a man of culture who has been cast out by the irresistible force of poverty from the centres of intellectual life into a small provincial town succumbs in time to the deadening effects of wet autumn, lack of means of communication, and the absolute impossibility of sensible conversation for days together. He develops into a carnivorous and vegetable-eating animal, drinks an excessive quantity of bottled beer, and becomes subject to fits

of weariness resembling the weakness that precedes physical sickness. He swallows the boredom of a small town unconsciously, as a dog swallows dirt with his food. The actual process of decay begins at the moment when the thought " Nothing matters " takes hold of the organism. This was the case with Dr. Obarecki of Obrzydłówek. At the period of his life when this story begins, he had already come to the end of the resources of Obrzydłówek as regards his brain, his heart, and his energy.

He had an unconquerable horror of intellectual effort, could walk up and down his study for hours together, or lie on the couch with an unlighted cigar in his mouth, straining his ear to catch a sound which would foretell an interruption of the oppressive silence, anxiously longing for something to happen: if only someone would come and say something, or even turn somersaults! The autumn usually oppressed him specially; there was something painful in the silence brooding over Obrzydłówek from end to end on a late autumn afternoon—something despairing that roused one to an inward cry for help. As though a fine cobweb were being spun across it, his brain elaborated ideas which were sometimes coarse and occasionally positively absurd.

His only diversion was whistling and his conversations with his housekeeper. They turned on the remarkable superiority of roast pork

stuffed with buckwheat to pork with any other kind of stuffing; but at times they became very improper.

The sky was frequently half covered by a cloud resembling enormous bays and promontories; unable to disperse, it would lie motionless, threatening to burst suddenly over Obrzydłówek and the distant lonely fields. The fine snow from this cloud would fasten in crystals on the window-panes, while the wind made weird penetrating sounds like an exhausted baby crying out its last sobs close by at a corner of the house. Stripped of their leaves and lashed by the driving snow, wild pear trees swayed their branches over the distant field paths. . . . There was something of a catarrhal melancholy in this landscape, which unconsciously induced sadness and restless fear. The same chronic melancholy lasted in a diminishing degree through the spring and summer. Without any tangible cause, a malignant sadness had settled in the doctor's heart. He had fallen into a fatal state of idleness, so that it had even become too much effort to read Alexis' novels.

Dr. Paweł's " metaphysics," with which he was seized from time to time, consisted in a few hours' severe self-examination. This was followed by a violent inflowing of memories, a hasty amassing of shreds of knowledge, and a furious struggle of all his nobler instincts against the stifling in-

activity; he indulged in reflections, outbursts of bitterness, firm resolutions, and projects. Naturally all this led to nothing, and passed in time like any other more or less acute illness. A good sleep would cure him of "metaphysics" as of a headache, and enable him to wake up fresh the next morning, with more energy to meet the tedium of daily life, and with a greater mental capacity for the invention of the most savoury dishes. This endemia of "metaphysics" made the doctor realize, however, when his mind was filled with the philosophy of strong common sense, that beneath his existence as a well-fed animal there was a hidden wound, incurable and unspeakably painful, like that of a diseased bone.

Dr. Obarecki had come to Obrzydłówek six years before, directly after completing his medical training, with a few exceptionally useful ideas in his mind and a few roubles in his pocket. There had been a great deal of talk at that time of the necessity of finding enlightened people who would settle in God-forsaken backwood places like Obrzydłówek. He had listened to the apostles of these schemes. Young, high-minded and reckless, he had within a month of settling in the town declared war against the local chemist and barbers, who encroached upon the medical profession. It was twenty-five miles to the nearest larger town, so the local chemist had exploited the situation. Those who wished to profit by

his medicaments had to pay a high price for them. He and the barbers, who got a percentage on the business, played into each others' hands. Consequently they were able to build themselves fine houses and wear "kacalyas" trimmed with bearskin. They went about with an air of dignity like "supporters"[1] at the Corpus Christi procession. When gentle hints and heated arguments had broken against the chemist's resistance, who declared the doctor's point of view to be a youthful Utopia, he scraped together a small sum and bought a travelling medicine-chest, which he carried with him on his rounds. He made up the medicines on the spot, sold them at a nominal price or gave them away, taught hygiene, made experiments, and worked perseveringly and with the utmost enthusiasm, giving himself no time for proper rest and sleep. It was a foregone conclusion that when the news of his portable chemist's shop, his giving his services to the people free of charge, and other things illustrating his point of view, became known, his windows were smashed. As Baruch Pokoik, the only glazier in Obrzydłówek, was busy at the time celebrating the Feast of Tabernacles, the doctor was obliged to paste up the window-panes with paper, and keep watch at night, revolver in hand. The windows were, in fact,

[1] It is considered a special privilege to walk on either side of the priest and support his arms in the procession.

broken periodically, until wooden shutters were procured for them. Rumours were spread among the common people that the doctor had intercourse with evil spirits, while the better educated were told that he was ignorant of his profession. Patients who wished to consult him were kept away by threats and noisy demonstrations outside the house.

The young doctor paid no attention to all this, and relied on the ultimate triumph of truth. But truth did not triumph—it is difficult to say why not. By the end of the year his energy was slowly ebbing away. Close contact with the ignorant masses had disillusioned him more than words can say. His lectures on hygiene, entreaties and arguments had fallen like the seed on rocky ground. He had done all that was in his power—and it had been in vain.

To speak candidly, people can hardly be expected to restore their neglected health by simple laws of hygiene when they have to go without boots in winter, dig up rotten potatoes from other people's fields in March to get themselves a meal, and grind alderbark to powder so as to mix it with a very slender supply of pilfered rye flour.

Imperceptibly things began not to matter to the doctor. "If they will eat rotten potatoes, let them eat them! I can't help it, even if they eat them raw. . . ."

The Jewish inhabitants of the little town were the only ones who continued to consult the idealist; they were not frightened by evil spirits, and the cheapness of the medicines greatly attracted them.

One fine morning the doctor awoke to the fact that the flame of inspiration burning brightly in him when he came to the little town, and to which he had trusted to illuminate his path, was extinguished. It had burnt out of its own accord. From that moment the travelling dispensary was locked up, and the doctor was the only one to profit by its contents. It was bitterly galling to him to own himself beaten by the chemist and barbers, and to end the war by locking his medicine-chest away in his cupboard. They had the right to boast that they had conquered, and to divide the spoil. Yet he knew it was not they; he had been conquered by his own weaker nature. He had allowed his high aims and noble actions to be suppressed, maybe because he had begun to attach too much importance to good dinners. Anyway they had been suppressed. He still carried on his practice, but no one seemed to reap any real benefit from his work.

By a strange coincidence all the neighbouring country-houses were in the possession of noble families of feudal character, who treated the doctor in an antiquated manner instead of conforming to the views of the present day. Dr.

Paweł had once paid a call at one of these houses, which turned out rather a failure. The nobleman received him in the study, remained in his shirt-sleeves during the interview, and went on quietly eating ham, which he cut with a penknife. The doctor felt his democratic spirit rising within him, made a few unpleasant remarks to the Count, and paid no more visits in the neighbourhood.

He had therefore no other choice than the priest and the magistrate. It is dull, however, to get too much of the priest's company, and the stories told by the magistrate were not worth following. So the doctor was left very much to his own company. To counteract the evil consequences of living alone, he made up his mind to get nearer to Nature, to recover his calm and inner harmony, and regain strength and courage by the discovery of the links which unite man with her. He did not, however, discover these links, though he wandered to the edge of the forest, and on one occasion sank into a bog in the fields.

The flat landscape was surrounded on all sides by a blue-grey belt of forest. A few firs grew here and there on grey sandhills, and waste strips of ground, belonging to God knows whom, were scattered in all directions. The only relief was given by the meadows covered with goat's-beard and yellowish grass, but even this withered prematurely—it was as if the light did not possess

enough intensity to develop colour. The sun seemed to shine on that desolate spot only in order to show how arid and depressing it was.

Daily the doctor trudged, umbrella in hand, along the edge of the sandy road, which was full of holes and marked by a tumbled-down fence. This road did not seem to lead anywhere, for it divided into several paths in the middle of the meadows, and disappeared among molehills. Later on it reappeared on the top of a sandhill in the shape of a furrow, and ran into a wood of dwarf pines.

Impatient anger seized the doctor when he looked at that landscape, and a vague feeling of fear made him restless. . . .

The years passed.

The priest's mediation had brought about a reconciliation between the doctor and the chemist, now that it was clear that the doctor's zeal for innovations had cooled. Henceforward the rivals hobnobbed at whist, although the doctor always felt a sense of aversion towards the chemist. By degrees even this slightly lessened. He began to visit the chemist, and to make himself agreeable to his wife. On one occasion he was startled by the result of analyzing his heart, which showed that he was even capable of falling platonically in love with Pani Aniela, whose intellect was as blunt as a sugar-chopper. She was under the entirely mistaken impression that she was slim

and irresistible, and talked unceasingly and with unexceptionable zeal of her servant's wickedness. Dr. Paweł listened to Pani Aniela's eloquence for hours together with the stereotyped smile that appears on the lips of a youth who is making himself agreeable to beautiful women while suffering tortures from toothache.

He was no longer capable of starting democratic ideas in Obrzydłówek, though for no better purpose than that of passing the time. He had intended at first to exchange visits with the butcher, but now he would not have done it at any price. If he talked, he preferred that it should be to people with at least a pretence to education. Not only had his energy given out, but also all respect for broader ideas. The wide horizon which once the idealist's eyes could hardly perceive had dwindled down to a small circle, measurable with the toe of a boot. When he had read socialistic articles during the first stages of his moral decay, it had been with bitterness and envy, alternating with the caution of a man who has a certain amount of experience in these matters. Gradually he came to reading them with distrust, then with contempt, and at last he could not conceive why he had ever troubled himself about these ideas which had become absolutely indifferent to him. The longing to make himself into a centre for intellectual life was far from him. He doctored according to routine methods,

and succeeded in working up a fairly good practice with the maxim: "Pay me and take yourself off!" His loneliness and the boredom of Obrzydłówek had become familiar to him.

And yet, in spite of everything, at this moment when he sat drumming with his fingers on the table, "metaphysics" had taken hold of him again. Already towards the end of the sixteen hours during which he had been celebrating the priest's name-day by playing whist, he had begun to feel uncomfortable. This was due to the chemist's beginning to talk atheism. Dr. Obarecki knew the hidden reason for this sudden assault on the priest's feelings quite well.

He foresaw that it was meant to be a prelude to a friendship between him and the chemist for the purpose of joining hands in a common utilitarian aim. One would write prescriptions a yard long, and the other exploit the situation. Possibly the chemist would soon pay him a visit and make an open proposal for such a partnership, and the doctor foresaw that he would not have the strength of mind to kick him out. He did not know what reasons to give for the refusal. The course that the interview would take would be this: The chemist would touch on the matter gradually, skilfully, referring to the doctor's need of capital as the cause of his being in difficulties, then bring the conversation round to Obrzydłówek affairs, and point out how much they would

benefit the community by joining hands; and the end would be their paddling in the mire together.

Supposing the partnership existed? What then . . .?

His heart overflowed with bitterness. What had happened? How could he have gone so far? Why did he not tear himself out of the mire? He was an idler, a dreamer, corrupting his own mind—a horrible caricature of himself.

As he looked out of the window, he began to scrutinize his own weaknesses of character in an extraordinarily minute and merciless examination. The snow had begun to fall in large flakes, veiling the melancholy landscape in mist and dimness.

This capricious and unprofitable train of thought was suddenly interrupted by loud expostulations from the housekeeper, who was trying to persuade someone to go away because the doctor was not at home. But wishing to break the tormenting chain of ideas, the doctor went out into the kitchen. A huge peasant was standing there, wearing an untanned sheepskin over his shoulders. He bowed very low to the doctor, so that his lamb's-wool cap brushed the floor; then he pushed the hair back from his forehead, straightened himself, and was preparing for his speech, when the doctor cut him short.

"What's the matter?"

"Please, sir, the Sołtys[1] has sent me."

[1] Answers more or less to the old-fashioned term "beadle."

"Who is ill?"

"It's the schoolmistress in our village. She's been taken bad with something. The Sołtys came to me, and he said: 'Go to Obrzydłówek for the doctor, Ignaz,' he said. . . . 'Perhaps,' he said. . . ."

"I'll come. Have you got good horses?"

"Fine fast beasts."

The doctor welcomed the thought of this drive, with its physical fatigue and even possible danger. With sudden animation he put on his stout boots and sheepskin, slipped into a fur coat large enough to cover a windmill, strapped on his belt, and went out. The peasant's "beasts" were sturdy and well-fed, though not large. The sledge had high runners and a light wicker body; it was well supplied with straw and covered with homespun rugs. The peasant took the front seat, untied his hempen reins, and gave the horses a cut with the whip.

"Is it far?" the doctor asked as they started.

"A matter of about twenty miles."

"You won't lose your way?"

"Who? . . . I?" He looked round with an ironical smile.

The wind across the fields was piercing. The runners, crooked and badly carved, ploughed deep furrows in the freshly fallen snow, and piled it up in ridges on either side. Nothing could be seen of the road.

The peasant pushed his cap on one side with a businesslike air, and urged on his horses. They passed a little wood, and came out on an empty space bounded by the forest which stood out against the horizon. The twilight fell, overlaying this severe desert picture with a blue light, which deepened over the forest. Balls of snow thrown up by the horses' hoofs flew past the doctor's head. He could not tell why he longed to stand up in the sledge and shout like a peasant with all his might—shout into that deaf, voiceless, boundless space which fascinated by its immensity as a precipice does. A wild and gloomy night was coming on fast, night such as falls upon deserted fields.

The wind increased and roared monotonously, changing from time to time into a solemn largo. The snow was driving from the side.

"Be careful of the road, my friend, else we shall come to grief," the doctor shouted, immediately hiding his nose again in his fur collar.

"Aho, my little ones!" bawled the peasant to the horses, by way of an answer. His voice was scarcely audible through the storm. The horses broke into a gallop.

Suddenly the snowdrifts began to whirl round madly: the wind blew in gusts; it buffeted the side of the sledge; it howled underneath; it took the men's breath away. The doctor could hear the horses snorting, but could distinguish neither

them nor the driver. Clouds of snow torn from the ground sped by like a team of horses, and the thud of their hoofs seemed to fill the air. A very pandemonium had burst loose, throwing the power of its sound upward to the clouds, whence it descended again with a crash. The smooth surface was dispersed into down which enveloped the travellers. It was as if monsters were reeling in a mad giant dance, overtaking the sledge from behind, running now in front, now at the sides, and pelting it with handfuls of snow. Somewhere far away a large bell seemed to be droning in a hollow monotone.

The doctor realized that they were no longer driving on the road; the runners moved forward with difficulty and struck against the edge of ruts.

"Where are we, my good fellow?" he exclaimed in alarm.

"I am going to the forest by the fields," the man answered; "we shall get shelter from the wind under the trees. You can go all the way to the village through the forest."

As a matter of fact, the wind soon dropped; only its distant roar could be heard and the snapping of branches. The trees, powdered with snow, stood out against the dark background of night. It was impossible to proceed quickly now, for they had to make their way between snowdrifts and the stems and projecting branches.

After an hour during which the doctor had

felt truly uncomfortable and alarmed, he at last heard the sound of dogs barking.

" That's our village, sir."

Dim lights flickered in the distance like moving spots. There was a smell of smoke.

" Look sharp, little ones !" the driver cheerily called out to the horses, and slapped himself after the manner of drivers.

A few minutes later they passed at full gallop a row of cottages, buried in snow up to their roofs. Heads were outlined in shadow against the window-panes from which circles of light fell on to the road.

" People are having their supper," the peasant remarked unnecessarily, reminding the doctor that it was time for the supper which he had no hope of eating that day.

The sledge drew up in front of a cottage. When the driver had accompanied the doctor through the passage, he disappeared. The doctor groped for the latch, and entered the miserable little room, which was lighted by a flickering paraffin lamp.

A decrepit old hunchback woman, bent like the crook of an umbrella handle, started from her bed on seeing him, and straightened the handkerchief round her head. She blinked her red eyes in alarm.

" Where is the patient ?" the doctor asked. " Have you a samovar ?"

The old woman was so perturbed that she did not grasp the meaning of his words.

"Have you a samovar? Can you make me some tea?"

"There is the samovar; but as to sugar——"

"No sugar? What a nuisance!"

"None, unless Walkowa has some, because the young lady——"

"Where is the young lady?"

"Poor thing! she's lying in the next room."

"Has she been ill long?"

"She's been ailing as long as a fortnight. She was taken bad with something."

The woman half opened the door of the next room.

"Wait a moment; I must warm myself," the doctor said angrily, taking off his fur coat.

It was not difficult to get warm in that stuffy little den; the stove threw out a terrific heat, so that the doctor went into the "young lady's" room as quickly as possible.

The lamp that was standing on a table beside the invalid's pillow had been turned low. It was not possible to distinguish the schoolmistress's features, as a large book had been placed as a screen, and the shadow from it fell on her face. The doctor carefully turned up the lamp, removed the book, and looked at her face. She was a young girl.

She had sunk into a feverish sleep; her face,

neck and hands, were flushed scarlet and covered with a rash. Her ashen-blonde hair, which was exceptionally thick, was tossed round her face, and lay in rich tresses on the pillow. Her hands were plucking deliriously at the coverlet.

Dr. Paweł bent right down to the sick girl's face, and suddenly, with a voice stifled by emotion, repeated:

"Panna Stanisława, Panna Stanisława, Panna St——"

Slowly and with difficulty the sick girl raised her eyelids, but closed them again immediately. She stretched herself, drew her head from one end of the pillow to the other, and gave a painful low moan. She opened her mouth with an effort and gasped for breath.

The doctor looked round the bare, whitewashed room. He noticed the windows which did not sufficiently keep out the draught, the girl's shoes, shrivelled with having been wet through constantly, the piles of books lying on the table, the sofa and everywhere.

"Oh, you mad girl, you foolish girl!" he whispered, wringing his hands. In distress and alarm he examined her, and took her temperature with trembling hands.

"Typhus!" he murmured, turning pale. He pressed his hand to his throat to stifle the tears which were choking him like little balls of cotton.

He knew that he could do nothing for her—

that, in fact, nothing could be done for her. Suddenly he gave a bitter laugh when he remembered that he would be obliged to send the twenty miles to Obrzydłówek for the quinine and antipyrin he wanted.

From time to time Stanisława opened her glassy, delirious eyes, and looked without seeing from beneath her long, curling eyelashes. He called her by the most endearing names, he raised her head, which the neck seemed hardly able to support, but all in vain.

He sat down idly on a stool and stared into the flame of the lamp. Truly misfortune, like a deadly enemy, had dealt him a blow unawares from a blunt weapon. He felt as if he were being dragged helplessly into a dark, bottomless pit.

"What is to be done?" he whispered tremblingly.

The cold blast penetrated through a crack in the window like a phantom of evil omen. The doctor felt as if someone had touched him, as if there were a third person in the room besides himself and the patient.

He went into the kitchen and told the servant to fetch the Sołtys immediately.

The old woman instantly drew on a pair of large boots, threw a handkerchief over her head, and disappeared with a comical hobble.

Shortly afterwards the Sołtys appeared.

"Listen! Can you find me a man to ride to Obrzydłówek?"

"Now, doctor? . . . Impossible! . . . There's a blizzard; he'd be riding to his death. One wouldn't turn a dog out to-night."

"I will pay—I will reward him well."

The Sołtys went out. Dr. Paweł pressed his temples, which were throbbing as though they would burst. He sat down on a barrel and reflected on something which happened long ago.

Footsteps approached. The Sołtys brought in a farmer's boy in a tattered sheepskin which did not reach to his knees, sack trousers, torn boots, and with a red scarf round his neck.

"This boy?" the doctor asked.

"He says he will go—rash youngster! I can give him a horse. But wherever at this time of——"

"Listen! If you come back in six hours, you will get twenty-five . . . thirty roubles from me . . . you will get what you like. . . . Do you hear?"

The boy looked at the doctor as if he meant to say something, but he refrained. He wiped his nose with his fingers, shuffled awkwardly, and waited.

The doctor went back to the school-teacher's bedroom. His hands were shaking, and went up to his temples automatically. He thought of a prescription, wrote it, scratched through what he

had written, tore it up, and wrote a letter to the chemist instead, begging him to despatch a horseman to the town at once, to ask the doctor to send him some quinine. He bent over the sick girl and examined her afresh; then he went into the kitchen and handed the letter to the boy.

"My dear boy," he said in a strange, unnatural voice, laying his hand on the lad's shoulder and slightly shaking him, "ride as fast as the horse will go—never mind him getting winded. . . . Do you hear, my boy?"

The lad bowed to the ground and went out with the Sołtys.

"Is it long since the teacher settled here with you in the village?" Dr. Paweł asked the old woman who was cowering by the stove.

"It's about three winters."

"Three winters! Did no one live here with her?"

"Who should there be but me? She took me into her service, poor wretch that I am. 'You'll not find a place anywhere else, granny,' she said, 'but there isn't much to do for me, only just a bit here and there.' And now here we are; I'd promised myself that she would bury me. . . . God be merciful to us sinners! . . ."

She began unexpectedly to whisper a prayer, detaching one word from the other, and moving her lips from side to side like a camel. Her head

shook and the tears flowed down the wrinkles into her toothless mouth.

"She was good——"

Granny began snivelling, and gesticulated wildly, as if she meant to drive the doctor away from her. He returned to the sick-room and began to walk up and down on tiptoe. Round after round he walked after his usual habit. Now and then he stopped beside the bed and muttered between his teeth with a rage that made his lips pale:

"What a fool you have been! It is not only impossible to live like that, but it is not even worth while. You can't make the whole of your life one single performance of duty. Those idiots will take it all without understanding; they will drag you to it by the rope round your neck, and if you let your foolish illusions run away with you, death will make you its victim; for you are too beautiful, too much beloved——"

As fire licks up dry wood, so a past and long-forgotten feeling took possession of him. It revived in him with the strength and the treacherous sweetness of former years. He persuaded himself that he had never forgotten her, that he had worshipped and remembered her up to that very moment. He gazed into the well-known face with an insatiable curiosity, and a dumb, piercing pain began to devour his heart as he thought that for three years she had been

living here, near him, and he only heard of it when death was on the point of taking her away from him.

All that was befalling him this day seemed to be the consequence of his animal existence, which had led him nowhere except to burrow in the ground. Yet he felt as if suddenly a mysterious horizon opened out before him, an ocean spreading far away into the mist.

With all the effort of impatient despair he grasped at memories, seeking refuge in them from an intolerable reality; he plunged into them as into the rosy halo of a summer dawn. He felt he must be alone, if only for a moment, to think and think. He slipped into a third room which was filled with forms and tables. Here he sat down in the dark to collect his thoughts and contrive some way of saving his patient.

But he began to recall memories:

He was then a poor student in his last year. When he went to the hospital on winter mornings, he stepped carefully so that not everyone should notice how cleverly the holes in his boots had been mended with cardboard. His overcoat was as tight as a strait-jacket, and so threadbare that the old-clothes man would not even give a florin for it when he tried to sell it in the summer. Poverty made him pessimistic, and produced that state of sadness which is more than mere unpleasant depression, but less than actual suffer-

ing. To be roused from it, one need only eat a chop or drink a glass of tea; but he frequently had no tea to drink, to say nothing of a dinner to eat. He used to run along the muddy Dłvga Street so as to enter the gate of the Saski Gardens by a quarter to nine.

Here he would meet a young girl and walk past her, looking at her long, heavy, ashen-blonde pigtails. She would not look up, but knitted her brows, which reminded one of the narrow, straight wings of a bird. He used to meet her there daily in the same place. She always walked quickly to the suburb beyond, where she entered a tram going to Praga.

She was not more than seventeen, but looked like a little old maid in her handkerchief thrown carelessly over her fur cap, in her clumsy, old-fashioned cloak, and shoes a size too large for her small feet. She always carried books, maps, and writing materials under her arm. On one occasion, finding himself in possession of a few pence, which were to have paid for his dinner, he was resolved to discover what her daily destination was. He therefore set out in pursuit, and entered the same car, but after he had sat down all his courage had failed him. The unknown measured him with such a look of absolute disdain that he jumped out of the tram immediately, having lost his bowl of broth and achieved nothing.

Yet he felt no grudge towards her; on the con-

trary, this had only raised her in his estimation. He thought about her unconsciously and uninterruptedly; he strove through the course of whole hours to call to mind her hair, her eyes, her mouth, the colour of her lips. And yet he strained his memory in vain. For scarcely had she vanished from his sight than her features vanished from his memory. Instead there was left a vision like a white cloud without any distinct features; it seemed to hover over him. His thoughts pursued that cloud in longing and humble timidity, with a touch of unconscious regret, sadness, and sympathy, which dominated him altogether.

He used to go every morning to compare the living girl with his vision, and the reality seemed to him the more beautiful of the two; her eyes, thoughtful, and clear like a spring, filled him with a certain sense of awe.

At that time one of his fellow-students, nicknamed "Movement in Space," unexpectedly got married. He was a great "social reformer," continually writing endless prefaces to works he never finished for lack of the necessary books of reference. His wife was a feminist and as poor as a church mouse. Her dowry consisted in an old carpet, two stewing-pans, a plaster cast of Mickiewicz, and a pile of school prizes. The young couple lived on the fourth floor and promptly began to starve. They both gave private

lessons so zealously that after separating in the morning they did not meet again till the evening. Nevertheless their house began to be the centre towards which each "social reformer" wended his way in his dirty boots, in order to sit for a while on the "Movement's" soft sofa, smoke his cigars, argue till he was hoarse, and in the end contribute a few pence towards the entertainment. The amiable hostess bought rolls and sausages, which she arranged artistically on a plate and handed round to her guests. You were always sure to meet someone interesting here, to become acquainted with great people as yet unknown to their age, and possibly you might even have a chance of borrowing sixpence.

Obarecki had turned pale with joy when one evening, on entering the room, he had found his beloved among the circle of friends. He had talked to her and lost his head completely. While walking home with the others that evening, he had had a longing to be alone—neither to dream nor to think of her, but just to steep his soul in her presence, see her and hear the sound of her voice, think as she did, and let the pictures which rose in his imagination take possession of him. He now distinctly remembered her wonderful eyes, with their bewildering depth, severe yet sympathetic, gentle and mysterious. He had experienced a feeling of joy and repose; as if, after a hot, wearisome journey, he had lighted upon

a cool spring, hidden in the shade of pines on a high hill.

They had surrounded her with respect, and seemed to attach special importance to her words. In introducing Obarecki, the "Movement" had said, with an air of importance, "Obarecki, a thinker, a dreamer, a great idler, yet the coming man—Panna Stanisława, our Darwinist."

The "great idler" had not been able to ascertain much about the "Darwinist"; merely that she had left the High School, was giving lessons, and intended to go to Paris or Zurich to study medicine, but had not a penny to bless herself with.

From that time onwards they frequently met in their friends' rooms. Panna Stanisława would sometimes bring a pound of sugar under her cloak, or a cold cutlet wrapped in paper, or a few rolls; Obarecki never brought anything, for he had nothing to bring; but instead he devoured the rolls and the "Darwinist" with his eyes.

One night, when escorting her home, he got as far as proposing to her. She only broke into a hearty laugh and took leave of him with a friendly grasp of the hand. Shortly afterwards she had disappeared; he heard that she had gone as governess into some aristocratic family in Podolia.

And now he had found her again in this forsaken corner, in this forest village inhabited only by peasants, with not a single intelligent person

near her. She had been living here all alone in this wilderness. And now she was dying. . . . All his former enthusiasm, and the unfulfilled dreams and desires of past days, suddenly sprang up within him and struck him like gusts of wind. A deadly pain seized his heart, and the poison of passion took hold of his blood. He returned on tiptoe to the sick-room, rested his elbows on the bed, and feasted on the sight of the marvellous contours of her bare shoulders and the lines of her bosom and neck. The girl was asleep; the veins on her temples were swollen, the corners of her mouth were moist, she exhaled fever heat, and drew in the air with a loud whistling sound. Dr. Paweł sat down beside her on the edge of the bed, gently fondled the ends of her soft, bright hair, and stroked it along his face, sobbing while he kissed it.

"Stasia, Stachna! Dearest!" he whispered low. "You are not going to run away from me again, are you? . . . Never! . . . you will be mine for ever . . . do you hear?—for ever. . . ."

The exuberance of youth awoke in him from its lethargy. Henceforth everything would be different; he felt a great strength in him for doing his work with his heart in it. Pain and hope were mingled as in a flame which consumed him and gave him no respite.

The night wore on. Though the hours went by slowly, more than six had passed since the

messenger left. It was four o'clock in the morning. The doctor listened, starting up at every sound. He fancied each moment that someone was coming—opening the door—tapping at the window. He strained and strained with his whole organism to listen. The wind howled, the door of the stove rattled; then again there was silence. The minutes passed like ages; his nerves, overstrained by impatience, threw him into a state of trembling all over.

When he took her temperature for the sixth time, the sick girl slowly opened her eyes; they looked almost black under their shade of dark lashes. Straining to look at him, she said in a hoarse voice:

"Who's that?"

But she fell back at once into her former state of unconsciousness. He cherished this moment as if it were a treasure. Oh, if only he had some quinine to lessen the pain in her head and restore her to consciousness! But the messenger had not arrived, and did not arrive.

Before dawn Dr. Obarecki walked the length of the village through the deep snowdrifts, deluding himself with a last hope of seeing the boy. An evil foreboding penetrated his heart like the point of a needle. The wind still howled in the bare branches of the wayside poplars with a hollow sound, although the storm had abated. Women were coming out of the cottages to fetch

water, their skirts tucked up above their knees. The farm lads were busy with the cattle; smoke was rising from the chimneys. Here and there a cloud of steam issued from a door which was opened for an instant.

The doctor found the Sołtys' house, and ordered horses to be put in at once. Two pairs were harnessed, and a lad drove them up to the school. The doctor took leave of the patient with eyes dilated with fatigue and despair, got into the sledge, and drove to Obrzydłówek.

He returned at two o'clock in the afternoon, bringing drugs, wine, and a store of provisions. He had stood up in the sledge almost all the way, longing to jump out and run faster than the horses, which were going at a gallop. He drove straight up to the school, but what he saw made him powerless to move from his seat. . . . A short, stifled cry burst from his lips, twisted with pain, when he saw that the windows were thrown wide open. A throng of children were crowded together in the passage. White as a sheet he walked to the window and looked in, standing there with his elbows resting on the window-sill.

On a bench in the schoolroom lay the naked body of the young teacher; two old women were washing it. Tiny snowflakes flew in through the window and rested on the shoulders, damp hair, and half-open eyes of the dead girl.

Bent double, as though bearing a mountain-load on his shoulders, the doctor entered the little bedroom. He sat down and repeated dully: "It is so—it is so!" He felt as if huge rusty wheels were turning with a terrific rattle in his head.

Stasia's bed was all in disorder; the window-frames rattled monotonously; the leaves of her plants were being caught by the frost, and drooped.

Through the half-open door the doctor saw some peasants kneeling round the body, which was now clothed; the children too had come in and were reading prayers from books; the carpenter was taking measurements for the coffin. He went in and gave orders in a husky voice for the coffin to be made of unplaned boards, and a heap of shavings to be placed under the head.

"Nothing else . . . do you hear?" he said to the carpenter with suppressed rage. "Four boards . . . nothing else. . . ."

He remembered that someone ought to be informed—her family. . . . Where was her family? With an aimless activity he began to arrange her books, school-registers, notebooks and manuscripts into a pile. Among the papers he came upon the beginning of a letter.

"DEAR HELENKA" (it ran)—"I have felt so ill for some days past that I am probably going into the presence of Minos and Rhadamanthus, Aeacus, Triptolemus, and many others of the kind. In

case of my removing to another place, please ask the Mayor of my village to send you all my property, consisting of books. I have at last finished my little primer, *Physics for the People*, over which we have so often racked our brains. Unfortunately I have not made a fair copy. If you have time—in case of my removal—arrange for the publication at once. Let Anton copy it out; he will do this for me.

"Oh, bother! . . . I just remember I owe our bookseller eleven roubles sixty-five kopeks; pay him with my winter coat, for I have no money. . . . Take for yourself in remembrance . . ."

The last words were illegible. There was no address; it was not possible to send off the letter. The doctor discovered the manuscript of the *Physics* in the table drawer. It consisted of notes on slips of paper, mixed up with rubbish of all kinds. There was a little underlinen, a cloak lined with catskin, and an old black skirt, in the wardrobe.

While the doctor busied himself in this way, he suddenly noticed the boy who had been sent for the remedies in the schoolroom. He was huddled against a corner of the stove, treading from one foot to the other. Savage hatred sprang up in the doctor's heart.

"Why did you not come back in time?" he cried, running up to the boy.

"I lost my way in the fields . . . the horse gave out. . . . I arrived on foot in the morning . . . the young lady was already—— "

"You lie!"

The boy did not answer. The doctor looked into his eyes, and was overcome by a strange feeling. Those eyes were weary and terrible; a peasant's stupid, mute, wild despair lurked in them as in an underground cavern.

"Here, sir, I have brought back the books the teacher lent me," he said, drawing some worn, soiled books from under his coat.

"Leave me alone! Be off!" the doctor cried, turning away and hurrying into the next room.

Here he stood among the rubbish, the books and papers thrown on the floor, and asked himself with a harsh laugh: "What am I doing here? I am no good; I have no right to be here!"

A feeling of profound reverence made him think the dead girl's thoughts in deep humility. Had he remained an hour longer, he would have risen to the heights where madness dwells. Without wishing to confess it to himself, he knew that it was fear on his own account which was taking possession of him. Throughout all that was overwhelming him at this moment, he felt that a great lack of balance was threatening to deprive him of the essence of human feeling—of egoism. To stifle egoism would mean his allowing himself to be enveloped by the same rosy mist which had

transported this girl from the earth. He must escape at once. Having decided on this, he began to despair in beautiful phrases which immediately brought him considerable relief. He ordered the sledge to be brought round. . . . Bending over Stasia's body, he whispered all the beautiful, empty things which people say in praise of greatness. He lingered once more in the doorway and looked back; for a second he wondered whether it would not be better to die at once. Then he pushed past the peasants crowding round the door, sprang into the sledge, tripped himself up, tumbled on his face, and was carried off, stifled by spasmodic sobs.

Stanisława's death exercised so much influence over Dr. Paweł's disposition that for some time afterwards, in his leisure moments, he read Dante's *Divine Comedy;* he gave up playing whist, and dismissed his housekeeper, aged twenty-four. But gradually he grew calm. He is now doing exceedingly well; he has grown stout, and has made a nice little sum. He has even revived some of his optimistic tendencies. For thanks to his energetic agitation, all the world in Obrzydłówek, with the exception of a few conservatives, is now smoking cigarettes rolled by themselves, instead of buying ready-made ones which are known to be injurious.

At last ! . . .

THE CHUKCHEE

By WACŁAW SIEROSZEWSKI

The country was shrouded in the bitter Arctic night. Cold mists swept along the ground below; a dark sky, spangled with stars, stretched above.

A man was standing on the steps of a little house with small windows and a flat roof; his head was bare, his hands were thrust deep into his pockets. He was gazing fixedly towards the south, where the first dawn was to break upon the long darkness. At times he fancied that he could already see it there, for something seemed to quiver in the infinite darkness; but then the changing mist merely swayed to and fro, and the stars trembled on the horizon. His weary eyes therefore turned towards the little town; his house stood on the outskirts of it. Lights were twinkling in the windows there, and the dogs in the various backyards were yelping and howling loudly in chorus. "Oh, how deadly this is!" he thought—"enough to drive anyone mad. And in a frost like this it's certain no one will come."

He was just turning to go indoors, when he caught the sound of snow creaking under quick footsteps. He began to listen; the footsteps turned into the path leading up to his house.

"Is that you, Józef?"

"Yes; how are you?" a voice, hoarse with the frost, cried from a distance; and presently a man of middle height, dressed in fur from head to foot, emerged from the darkness. "What are you doing, you silly fellow, standing out here in a blouse in cold like this? You are certain to catch pneumonia."

"And why not? . . . A year sooner or later——"

"All very fine! But I confess to you, Stefan, I shouldn't like to die here. One can't even decay like a human being; one would have to lie here for centuries like an ice statue, while the dogs would howl and howl——"

"Well, they are howling unbearably now; it's as if they scented something. They are worse than ever to-day."

"They are certain to smell something; in the town they say that the Chukchee are encamping here, and I have just come to tell you of it. But let us go indoors; it's terribly cold, worse than it has yet been this year."

They went in. Stefan lighted the fire and busied himself with getting tea ready; Józef

threw off his furs and paced up and down the room with long strides.

"I say! This news is not quite without importance for us."

"What?"

"That they have come."

"The Chukchee?"

"Why, yes!"

Stefan burst out laughing.

"It's imperative for us to make friends with them; they are said to trade with America."

"Then with whom are we to make friends? With the Yankees?"

"No, with the Chukchee. Do be serious. You must do it, and it will be easy enough for you with your workshop,—all kinds of people constantly come to you. I will persuade Buza, the Cossack, to bring them; you will have a first-rate interpreter."

"By all means persuade Buza——"

"Oh, stop that! You always pretend to be indifferent to everything. If I had your health and strength, and were as clever——"

"Then you would be as homesick as I am, and pretend to care as little——"

"Do you think that I am not homesick?"

"No, I don't think you are—not in the least. You have a happy disposition, and can distract yourself with books and plans and dreaming, even if it is only for a short time. I must live, work,

be active; I need impressions from outside. Otherwise I go utterly to pieces; I feel that I am slowly dying."

They sat down to tea and chatted until midnight. In that continuous darkness the late hours of night differed from the rest in the position of the stars, a harder frost with louder reports of the cracking ground, the fact that the fires in the cottages were extinguished, and the quieter but more dismal howling of the dogs.

"Then remember that I will bring them. Do something to take their fancy; you know how to do it."

"Very good. It just happens that I have the District Administrator's musical box here to repair; I will play it to them."

"That will delight them. 'A talking box'—I can imagine what they will say! And don't forget to buy vodka for them, and to entertain Buza also. We shall have need of him. I don't yet know what we shall decide upon—I don't even try to think about it; but I feel that something will come of this. . . ."

"What? . . . Nothing will come of it. There will not even be any vodka left as a result, for they will drink it all up."

"You horrible pessimist! You always poison everything for me!" Józef cried from the hall, and he banged the door after him.

Stefan stood in the middle of the room for a long while, listening to Józef's brisk footsteps. He was smiling, for he liked to be accused of being a pessimist.

A few days later, sitting at the table with his back towards the door, and busy with his work, he heard a curious noise outside—someone stamping and pulling at the strap which served as a latch, as if unused to it.

Stefan turned his head inquiringly, and at the same moment a flat, brown face appeared in the doorway.

"Go in! Go in! You will let the cold into the cottage," someone cried from the hall.

Stefan recognized Buza's voice.

"Come in, by all means!"

"They have no manners. They are real Chukchee. This one is called Wopatka; he has been baptized. He is rather a drunkard, and rather a thief, but a good fellow. And this one —it's better not to touch him—is Kituwia. . . . Don't touch him!"

The natives stood quietly in the middle of the room, and looked round inquisitively, but without the slightest bewilderment. Their furs, which they wore with the skin turned to the inside, hung about them heavily and clumsily. They appeared to Stefan to be very much alike. But Kituwia had a darker complexion, and there was evidence in his unmoving face, erect head, and

compressed lips of a hard pride, amounting to contempt for all and everything.

Wopatka fell into a broad grin as he glanced eagerly with his slanting eyes round the room, which was so large and well furnished in comparison with his own tent.

"Take off your cap," Buza said to him, nudging him with his elbow.

Wopatka hastily pulled off his cap and showed the usual conical-shaped Chukchee head.

Kituwia had no cap. His long, thick, tousled hair was held back by a narrow strap tied just above his forehead. A similar strap from his low-cut skin jerkin crossed his bare chest and neck. He gave Stefan a sharp look, and uttered a few disconnected guttural sounds to his companion.

"There! Do you hear?" Buza said with a laugh. "They speak exactly like reindeer. They believe in reindeer, too; they think they will always have them in the next world. But Pan Józef told me to bring them, so I have brought them."

"Very good. I will get tea for you at once—or perhaps vodka would be better?"

"That would be better, for they don't think much of tea."

Stefan showed them a magnet, and made the cuckoo-clock strike to amuse them. He had a certain amount of success with the clock; Wopatka

was delighted, but Kituwia's restrained manner threw a chill over everything. The fire crackled merrily in the chimney; the guests threw off their furs and lolled on the benches; Buza burst out laughing from time to time, and Wopatka chuckled quietly, but Kituwia ran his keen glance from one object to another. However, at last even his face lighted up, and, uttering a smothered cry, he pointed to some large stones tied as a weight to the drying reindeer sinews. The guests formed a circle round these and tried to lift them with outstretched arms, but only Kituwia could do this.

When Stefan did the same, the native's face brightened with a look of friendliness. He called Stefan " brother," and passed his hand caressingly over his back and shoulders.

" He is praising you and asking why he never sees you among the people round the tavern."

" Tell him that I haven't time; I am busy."

While Buza was explaining this, Kituwia's face assumed an expression of stony contempt.

" He doesn't believe that you are a smith—and that you are respected by the District Administrator all the same. He is just an ignorant native. With them a strong man only drinks and fights, and looks upon the rest as low."

The guests conscientiously ate and drank what was offered them. At parting Wopatka said,

"Brother! Brother!" a countless number of times. The disagreeable smell of badly tanned reindeer skin and rancid reindeer grease remained behind them when they were gone.

"Your fame will spread among the Chukchee; you will have no peace now," Buza said to Stefan in the hall. "We thank you for your invitation. When will you send for us again?"

"Ask Pan Józef!"

"Well, did they come?" Józef asked on the following day.

"I should rather think so! I was obliged to air the room for several hours afterwards."

"Did they not invite you to visit them?"

"No."

"We must have patience. They will invite us. Buza told me they are enchanted."

"Buza himself seemed to be the most enchanted. He ate and drank enough for three."

"And Wopatka?"

"What is there to say about him? He certainly seems a good hand at vodka. He is not up to much."

"No need to despise people like that; they will prepare the way excellently, and others will follow. One must wait patiently; I beg you be patient. I will arrange it. Last night I went to see Father Pantelay, the missionary. He is learning Chukchee. By-and-by we may be able

to do something. We must learn to understand their customs and be friendly with them, so that they may get to like us. Don't grumble about them."

"I am not grumbling, but—they sat here too long."

"Well, we also have been sitting here too long."

Several days passed. The Chukchee did not show themselves. Despite his assumed indifference and incredulity, Stefan was a little anxious, and looked round hastily every time the door opened.

It was late. Having just finished his work, and blown out the candle for the sake of economy, Stefan was musing in the firelight, when his attention was attracted by unusual sounds from outside—a curious noise and shuffling. Then the house door opened violently and banged to; someone rushed panting into the room and held the door against someone else who tried to open it. Stefan jumped up in astonishment and hastily lighted the candle. A Chukchee was standing at the door, covered with snow. He had wound the latch strap round his hand, and, steadying himself with his foot against the door, was pulling at it with all his might. It shook in the struggle. The native looked at Stefan, made an imploring gesture, and showed that he was defenceless. From the hall came the sound of an impatient, hoarse voice cursing, accompanied by heavy

kicks on the door. Stefan fancied that he recognized the voice.

"Who's there? Stop that kicking at once! To the devil with you!" he exclaimed angrily.

The tugging ceased. There was a sound of muttering for some time longer, but when footsteps were heard approaching the unknown person left the hall. The Chukchee dropped the strap and turned to Stefan.

"Brother! Gem Kamakatan" — and he pointed to himself—"Gem no knife . . . Gem . . . brother!" He made a pretence of falling to indicate that he would have been killed. His eyes were friendly; his fat, ugly face, with its wide, extended nostrils, expressed emotion and gratitude. "Brother! Anoai! Anoai!"

He went to the fire and began to shake the snow out of his skin jerkin. His furs, hair, and ears were full of it. He indicated by violent shuddering that he was wet, and that the water was running down his body under his clothes. He began to fain shivering and dying.

Stefan knew perfectly well that in weather as cold as this even a Chukchee would freeze to death in damp clothes. He guessed what the native wanted, and nodded.

"Gem Kamakatan" laughed and began to undress quickly. The next moment he emerged from his furs naked like a Greek statue, and Stefan watched with interest what would happen

further. The Chukchee calmly hung his clothes in front of the fire, looked round, and, seeing Stefan's bed ready for the night, jumped in with great glee and disappeared under the quilt.

All this was done so adroitly and unexpectedly that Stefan could not help bursting out laughing. The Chukchee drew his head from under the quilt again, and repeated in a friendly way: "Brother! Brother!"

"Well, has he been here?" asked Józef, coming in at his usual hour.

"He is here even now."

Stefan told his friend of the whole strange adventure.

"Excellent! Excellent! Things are moving," the latter repeated, walking on tiptoe.

"There's nothing excellent about it. I wish he were sleeping in your bed. He looks as if he had never washed or combed himself in his life. If he had at least cut his hair; but he wears it long, as if he wished to make himself objectionable like Kituwia."

"That's nothing; these things are comparative trifles. Let me see him. The longer his hair is, the better; for in that case he is a warrior and a celebrity. Did he tell you his name?"

"Yes; it's something queer like Gem Kamaka."

They took the candle and went cautiously up to the bed where the native, with his copper face

in an aureole of long matted hair, lay asleep on a white European pillow. Suddenly his eyelids quivered and his eyes opened wide. For a moment he looked in astonishment at the men standing beside him; then he jumped up and stretched out his bare arm with a despairing gesture.

" Brother ! Brother !" he whispered—" Anoai !"

" Brother !" Stefan quickly repeated, touching him kindly.

The native's face brightened with a childish laugh. He jumped lightly out of bed and ran for his clothes.

" A fine model !" Józef exclaimed, slapping his back in a friendly way.

The native turned round with a start. In order to reassure him, therefore, Józef went through the whole of his Chukchee vocabulary; and though " Gem-Kamaka " certainly did not understand much of this disconnected conversation, he grinned and repeated every word. His clothes being still wet, he sat down as he was at the table where the friends were drinking tea, and consented to eat something too, talking uninterruptedly in his reindeer dialect, and showing his large white teeth as he laughed heartily. Before he left he again laid his hand gratefully on Stefan's shoulder and said " Brother !" He also promised to bring his wife and parents to see him.

" And bring Buza, Wopatka, and Kituwia."

The Chukchee's face clouded a moment. "Very well—and Buza and Wopatka. We will drink vodka," he said in the local Russian-Chukchee jargon.

"We will drink vodka."

After he was gone Józef embraced Stefan excitedly.

"This is splendid—first-rate! I already see myself on the ship."

A considerable time passed; the continuous darkness began to be pierced by rosy gleams. But nothing was heard of the Chukchee. On the contrary, it appeared to Stefan as if those who came into the town avoided him. When Kituwia met him, he did not come near or even nod to him: sometimes he stared at Stefan with a threatening look in his eyes. Wopatka turned aside when he saw him in the street. "Gem Kamatakan" gave no news of himself, and Buza, on being questioned, declared that he really knew nothing about him.

"Gem-Kama, did you say? That's not even a name, let alone its having any meaning. I know every Chukchee word, but I never heard that. Perhaps he is one of those natives who live without faith or law in outlandish parts of the country—in a word, a brigand. But never fear; I have only to find out where 'Gem-Kama' is, and I will get him here. But what brought him to you two gentlemen?"

"What brought him? He came of his own accord."

Buza looked at Józef suspiciously.

"The Chukchee say that Pan Stefan and a Chukchee together beat Kituwia; only the Chukchee was not called Gem-Kam, but Otowaka. The Chukchee in this district respect Kituwia very much, and are afraid of him. They say that he is a true Chukchee—a warrior. They are a wild people, but they have their customs; they are not like the Yakut."

"But it's not true! Nothing of the kind happened. Ask Kituwia."

"No, thank you; he would only knock me down! A man must not only be careful not to ask him about it, but must not even show that he knows. Wopatka told me of it."

"Where are we to look for you if we need you?"

"People will tell you where;—the tavern is the best, for a good deal of business of different kinds is being done with the Chukchee just now, and I am interpreter. You can't get them to do anything without vodka."

A few more days had passed, when suddenly such a remarkable thing happened that all the inhabitants of the little town came out to watch it. A number of festively dressed Chukchee on two sledges, each drawn by two pairs of fine reindeer, drove up at full gallop to Stefan's house. Stefan went out on to the steps to meet them. The first to alight was an old Chukchee, dressed in a costly "docha" made of black rat, skilfully

embroidered, and edged with beaver. He supported himself as he walked by resting his hand lightly on the shoulders of his sons, who held his feet by the ankles and respectfully placed them on the steps. They were followed by a boy of nine, his head bare and his hair closely cropped, and then came two small, alert, queer-looking individuals. One wore a docha of black rat, similar to the old man's but not so good; the second had no outer wrap at all, but, dressed in tight-fitting fur, looked like a gnome escaped from the forest. By their plaits, which were bound up with tinkling silver ornaments, and by the raspberry-coloured silk handkerchiefs across their foreheads, Stefan knew that these were ladies. They were both tattooed. The elder one had blue waving lines worked in silk on her forehead and cheeks; the younger had deep scars along her nose and chin. Her figure was not without charm; she was slim, and moved gracefully. She had the Chukchee woman's eyes, and her face, which was rather large, expressed a certain amount of determination. The general impression was spoilt, however, by a nervous habit of looking behind her.

"Well, here they are!" Józef cried, hurrying in after the guests. "Receive them somehow, and I will fetch Buza at once."

"Anoai! Anoai!" the Chukchee greeted their host.

There were too many guests for the available seats, so Stefan pulled out some rugs from a corner and spread them in the middle of the floor. Sitting down on them in a circle, the natives began to chatter. One of the old man's sons was the Chukchee who had dried his clothes at Stefan's fire. He was evidently relating the adventure—certainly not for the first time. Yet they all listened attentively, assenting with friendly grunts and looking with interest at the bed; the younger woman even jumped up and peeped under the quilt, whereupon they all burst out laughing. When the clock struck, the cuckoo and its movements and sound made an immense impression, and the little boy shouted with delight. They all jumped up and stood in front of the clock, imitating it, and when the door shut with a snap behind the little bird they sprang away in fright at first, but ended by laughing loudly. However, the old man could put a stop to their merriment in a moment if he chose.

Buza, Wopatka, and Józef now came in.

" Well, I told you so ! It's Otowaka, not Gemka. There's certainly no such person as Gemka, and ' gem-kamatakan ' means in Chukchee, ' I am ill.' It's a great honour that old Otowaka has come to you himself. He's very proud, and the richest man in the country—quite the richest. You have been most successful."

He sat down in the circle of Chukchee with

Wopatka, who kept a little behind him. Józef helped Stefan to prepare the feast and boil the samovar. They sent out for water.

"He is a much-respected man. He has innumerable reindeer, three wives in three different places, and six sons," Buza said, growing proportionately communicative as the vodka and food disappeared. "You have been very successful. He is rewarding you and doing you honour. You have only to go to him, and he will give you valuable furs; he will even give a daughter to each of you. He has beautiful daughters; I saw them in the town as they passed through in the caravan. For these Otowakas come from a long distance, so they travel in caravans. He evidently wants to ask you to do some work for him, for he wished to know whether you were a good locksmith and could put together a foreign rifle which has been taken to pieces. The Americans always sell them arms without cock or trigger. So I told him you had clever fingers, and that even the District Inspector thinks highly of you. The old man listened to this carefully. He is sure to offer you a present, and you must take it, or he will be very much offended."

The magnet and other wonders Stefan was able to show them caused the greatest delight to the natives, but their merriment reached its height when Józef started to play the barrel organ. They hung over the box, laid their ears to it, poked

their noses into it, grunted and stamped in rhythm, and finally began to move in a slow dance. Their eyes laughed, and their faces shone with grease and perspiration.

"Hey! Come along! Jump up, Wopatka! Now, that's most graceful!" Buza exclaimed, pulling the Chukchee, who was half tipsy, by the arm.

At that moment the door opened wide and Kituwia appeared on the threshold. Józef, very much pleased, went towards him, but the Chukchee neither stirred nor gave the usual greeting, "Anoai!" He closed the door behind him, and, leaning against it, held out one hand in an attitude of defence, and laid the other on his neck. His hair stood out wildly from under the leather band, and his eyes glowed with a wolfish fierceness. At the sight of him the circle of merry people in the middle of the room became petrified. The old man looked darkly at the bold intruder, the young men bent forward as if ready to spring at him, the women stared with wide-open mouths.

"What do you want?" cried Stefan, advancing. "Be off!"

"Go out! Take yourself off when you aren't invited!" Buza said, coming forward to support his host. "Be careful not to go near him," he added to Stefan, "or he will run you through. You see how he lays his hand on his neck: he has a knife there; I can see he has—I can see it by the strap on his neck. What do you mean by bringing

a knife with you into the town, you damned scoundrel? Don't you know that's forbidden? I'll tell the Inspector, and to the end of your life you'll never be allowed to come into the town again. You'll be sent away to the tundra at once. Give me the knife."

"I will give it you directly, but I want it first for that dog whom I have chased like a hare all over the country," Kituwia calmly answered in Chukchee.

One of the young Chukchee sprang towards him, but Józef seized him by the shoulder. Neither he nor Stefan understood what the natives were talking about, but they guessed that there was a quarrel.

"You would do better to drink this and join us," Józef said in a conciliatory way, taking Kituwia a glass. The latter pushed it aside.

"That's bad! . . . He won't drink vodka," Buza cried in Russian. "They will go for one another presently! . . . Hey! be off! You won't take vodka from the gentleman himself? Who do you think you are? I will call the Cossacks directly! Do you behave like this in a gentleman's house? And it's not long since you were entertained here! You tundra dog! I will have you taken up at once. Ha, ha! don't try it on me! You know who I am. Let me go by at once; I will go and call the guard. But you keep him talking here," he whispered to Stefan.

He turned towards the entrance, but retreated immediately, for Kituwia started forward, and the dangerous quiver of his lips showed his large white teeth. In a moment the room was in an uproar. Stefan, Buza, and Kituwia, surrounded by struggling Chukchee, burst through the door, which opened with a crash, and into the hall. Stefan lay with his chest on Kituwia's chest; the native struggled beneath him and tried unsuccessfully to free his hand. Stefan was thus able to seize him by the throat. Kituwia choked and shook his head until he became exhausted. Someone broke the strap on his neck with a jerk, and a large broad-bladed knife flew jingling into a corner. Buza, in the street, called for the Cossacks, and a large crowd of people came on to the scene. Stefan and Józef were now, in their turn, obliged to defend the enfeebled Kituwia from the Chukchee's rage. At last twenty-five Cossacks appeared; the assailant was arrested and led off to prison, the crowd following him with insults.

"You'll have a nice time! . . . A nice look-out for you! . . . You'll get thirty such good lashes you won't want to sit down for a year to come! . . . You'll remember what it is to come here with a knife! . . . Perhaps you still want to butcher us all? . . . Ah, you are short-handed now! Times have changed!"

The warrior looked at them fiercely and shrugged his bound shoulders.

"What is it all about?" Stefan and Józef asked Buza.

"Who knows anything about them?" he answered with indifference. "Anyhow, they are drunk."

"No, no; that's not it," a fisherman remarked. "It's an old quarrel that has come down to them from their forefathers, and now they say it's about Otowaka's daughter-in-law, Kituwia's own sister. Young Aimurgin stole her. That's long ago, and they now have children, but . . . what memories these fellows have! I expect the old man paid a good sum, for he was willing to make it up, but Kituwia never would. They say that he had been living with his sister . . . they aren't baptized—though those who are often do the same. So Kituwia wanted to take the woman away; but Otowaka certainly could not allow that, or he would have had no peace on the tundra."

Buza became the hero of the hour, and received frequent invitations to supper. After vodka, but not before, he related in detail what had happened:

"They were all drinking together and enjoying themselves. They were playing the District Administrator's barrel organ and dancing—even Otowaka himself was stamping his foot. . . . It would certainly have ended badly if I hadn't

seized him, for I saw him put his hand on his neck."

"You'll catch it from him! He'll pay you out for this! You know him."

"How can he pay me out? I walk along the street quite openly; he had better be careful himself. He has been sent away from the town. When I see him I'll collar him at once and put him in prison. He had better look out. For if he comes my way . . . by God! . . . I'll knock him down—I'll just knock him down! Don't let him forget! Why should I be particular about a brigand like that, when Otowaka himself offers me his friendship?"

Otowaka remained near the town for some time longer, but was rarely seen. Józef and Stefan visited him in his encampment, where he received them in an exceptionally friendly manner. He did not offer them his daughters, but wished to give them a place of honour above even the missionary, whom, together with Buza, he often entertained in recollection of his son's adventure. The friends would not agree to this, and thus won Father Pantelay's favour for all time, drawing from him golden words on the humility which wins a man heaven.

"I am urging him to seek the Divine grace and be baptized," he said, looking towards the old Chukchee. . . .

They were offered dessert—frozen reindeer

marrow, chopped fine and arranged in small heaps —which, being hard, was moistened with a plentiful supply of vodka, as may be imagined. "It would be safer for him to be baptized. He could encamp on the western tundra."

"Well, is he willing?"

"He doesn't refuse, but says that he will see."

Before they left, the rich man presented each guest with a foxskin, and begged him to be so kind as to visit him on the tundra.

"There I am in my right place; that's my own country."

Józef's eyes sparkled.

"What do you think—can we go, Father?" he asked the missionary when they reached home.

Father Pantelay was in a very good temper.

"Perhaps we shall go. . . . If only he would be baptized! So many souls would be saved, for he rules the whole family."

"Oh, he is sure to be baptized. If we go there, he will be baptized out of sheer hospitality to us. Besides, we can take him presents. Here it's different, and nothing will come of it."

"That is true. In his native country a man is more inclined to listen to the voice of God, and a hard disposition is softened there more easily. For virtue is immanent in everyone's soul, but the way into the soul is often dark and crooked and difficult to find. People often need

a pretext to bring them on to the highroad to good and salvation."

Father Pantelay talked at great length on the difficulties of such a task, and, as Józef was an attentive listener and did not argue with him, they soon became great friends. Meanwhile Stefan gradually made preparations for the journey by buying up the best dogs.

At length they started on their long missionary journey.

It seemed like a waking dream to the two friends when, surrounded by a crowd of inhabitants, they shouted to the dogs and were borne away at full speed along the track. Excitedly they looked back at the little town for the last time. The caravan consisted of three sledges, each with fifteen dogs. Buza drove in front with the provisions. Father Pantelay followed with his luggage and presents—tea, tobacco, and other valuables; Stefan and Józef came behind. Józef had no idea how to manage the dogs, and was of no use whatever on the journey. Father Pantelay kept looking round at them and smiling in a friendly way. He was glad that he had taken them with him, for he was setting out for an unknown country, and although God is everywhere, and always has us under His protection, yet it is pleasant to be surrounded by courageous and friendly people with whom a refreshing and instructive conversation is possible.

"I have never been farther in this direction than the edge of the tundra; the Spirit of God alone hovers over the waste beyond. Buza has been there; he has travelled to the world's end. Hey, Buza! what is it like farther on? Shall we be able to drink tea soon?"

"Where we stop we shall drink tea," the Cossack answered gravely.

He was immensely impressed by his own dignity as head of the expedition. He sat on the cask of vodka as if it were a throne, watching over it with a jealous eye.

"When we have passed the edge of the forest there will be no more houses or people to be seen. After that vodka will be all-powerful, and will have to answer every purpose; even our lives depend on it. Those cursed Chukchee drink it like fishes, and are wild to get it. When they've had a little, they are ready to give up everything for it; you've only to ask, and you can get anything from them. Yet we shall have nothing with us when we come back, for we shall have eaten our provisions and given away the presents. The sledges will be empty, and there won't be any means of reloading them; and as the dogs will have grown fat through resting and eating reindeer paunch at Otowaka's, there'll be no holding them, and we shall tear back. Ha, ha! Hey!" He alternately reflected, shouted, or sang a local song in a thin voice:

"O Sidorek, O Sidorek,
The light breath of warm breezes
Blows over land and sea!
Now go and fetch your sleigh;
Harness the dogs without delay.
Out to the rocks let them swiftly take you,
Out to the rocks by the shore of the sea,
O Sidorek, O Sidorek!"

"Buza, Buza, curb your frivolity!" Father Pantelay admonished him from a distance, as, in the silence of that frozen waste, his voice reached the other travellers through the clear, cold air.

The March sun made the snowdrifts appear so bright and smooth that by contrast the smallest bush seemed like a wood, and the slightest unevenness a hill. Soon, however, the summits of distant mountains showed on the horizon, with their white line sharply defined against the blue sky. The travellers turned towards these, and spent the night in a lonely fishing hut, the last human habitation, on the very outskirts of the dwindling forest. Henceforward they had only snow, rocks, and sky round them; the only trees to be seen were those washed down by the sea or by river floods, and the only people those in Otowaka's encampment.

The strong, well-fed dogs went at a brisk pace. After a day's journey the travellers unexpectedly found themselves at the brink of a steep chasm. Below it a snowy expanse showed as far as the eye could reach.

"The sea!" Buza cried.

They had guessed in time, and stopped the dogs.

"Do you see those specks shining in the distance, as if they were bits of sun? Those are ice-packs. But farther away—under that cloud on the horizon—is the open sea which never freezes. They say there is land beyond it; but no one has ever been there, for whoever goes doesn't come back."

For a while they stood entranced by the extent of the view and by the sun, which threw delicate blue shadows on the long, still, frozen waves. At last Buza reminded them that they must descend the cliffs and drive along the shore. They passed dark chasms all day long, for the sea had formed a bay here, and the whole shore was equally steep and defended by rocks.

"The waves beat up to the very top here; they are all 'bulls,'" Buza said, using a Russian expression for the cliffs.

There is indeed something defiant and bull-like in these last natural land defences, lifting their rocky crests to the sky.

The men spent the night under some tree trunks which had been washed down there by a stream.

"Do you know," Józef said to Stefan, as they lay down to sleep, "I have a superstitious fear that something will stop us, and it grows with every verst we pass."

Stefan was far too tired to analyze subtle emotions.

The weather continued favourable. It was only on the third day that a light, dry land breeze from the south began to blow the powdery snow from the clefts in the rocks on to their heads. The cold did not trouble them much, however, for the wall of cliffs protected them from the full blast of the wind. All the same, the Cossack shook his head and hurried on the dogs.

"It's not far now, but we must make haste. There are two promontories not far off, jutting out like stone bulls; they are called Pawal and Peweka. We shall have to cut through to the sea between them. Wet or fine, it's always windy there."

They arrived at the foot of Pawal towards the afternoon. The giant rock rose to a great height and ran out a long way into the sea. On both sides the land fell back from it abruptly, as if in fear. On the farther side of the narrow strait appeared a similar dark mass, though its size was lessened by the distance.

"You can see the encampment from here; it is on Peweka, in a hollow between two crags. Yet it's strange that I don't see any smoke. Perhaps the wind has blown it away. How it does blow! We shall have a bad time."

"Shall we spend the night here?"

"Spend the night—where there isn't a tree?

Besides, who would spend the night here when he can see tents? The natives would lose all their respect for us. Let's go on! It may blow worse to-morrow. We will just feed the dogs, and then be off."

They unpacked the provisions and began to feed the dogs, taking some refreshment themselves. The wind made wild music among the rocks. When at times a more violent blast reached this sheltered place, their hands instantly became numb.

"We shall be frozen in another moment!"

"Please God, we shan't freeze, only we mustn't stop on the way or let go of the sledges for a moment; and we must tie everything to them, for whatever falls off will be lost. Keep close one behind the other, so as not to have to shout, for it's no use; and be very careful not to scatter snow over one another's sledge. Don't allow the dogs to turn with the wind, but keep them against it sideways; and remember, Father—and you too, sir—to have them well in hand. God preserve you from going near Peweka, for it's open sea there, and the gale will carry you away to your death. Don't stop by the way, for you will get no rest by stopping. In the Name of the Father and the Son!"

They rushed out impetuously from their sheltered nook. The gale caught them at once, blowing about the dogs' hair and tilting the

sledges upwards. The men bent down to meet it, and turned their faces away, but they felt it cutting through them more and more. It beat against them with increasing force, piercing them through until there was no warmth left in their bodies, nothing but a smarting sensation from the snow which completely covered them. Their mouths and their clothes were soon full of these parching flakes; they felt them penetrating their furs to their very skin and melting there, making them shudder all over. Streams of this powdery snow ran above the smooth, shining surface of the ground, coiling with a hiss like an adder round their feet and bodies, catching the dogs' drooping heads, striking the runners of the sledges, and rolling back in grey balls which increased as they wound in and out of the caravan.

The men crouched in contorted attitudes, seeking to screen themselves from the biting cold. Their chins almost rested on their knees, and they only glanced ahead now and then to where the rock, which was to be their refuge, was darkening in the distance. The dogs also understood where their safety lay; they used their light shaggy paws to the best of their power, and plunged resolutely into the raging wind driving towards the sea. They constantly fell down, for they slipped on the hard surface; their eyes were bloodshot and starting from the sockets, the breast collar choked them, the sledge had

suddenly become a great weight on them. The poor animals ran stooping low, and not even daring to open their mouths to take breath, for the cold wind hurt their throat and lungs. The rattle of the sledges, the dogs' whining, the men's curses, were like atoms in the furious, hollow roar of the storm, and fell into space, as though no one were calling, suffering, or struggling. Stefan never took his eyes off the distance, mentally measuring it all the while; he realized despairingly that his dogs were growing tired and would cease to follow the leader, and that he must stand up to drive them on and turn them back into the track. Józef clung helplessly to the sledge, shivering as in fever. At last, when they were nearly under the huge crag of Peweka, the wind abated and merely blew in gusts. Stefan looked up with a feeling of almost religious awe at this rock which weathered gales and sea. Buza was waiting for them there.

"Well, we have done more than we could expect! We may congratulate ourselves. Now it will be just as if we were at home. I am only surprised not to see anyone about. It's true the weather's bad. But they ought to have seen us. Perhaps they have been killing reindeer or catching seals, and have eaten too much and are asleep. We must go up the mountain. Hi, Shaggy-hair! Noch! Noch!"

The dogs, being hungry and in a bad temper,

began to bite one another. By the time they had been quieted and the harness set to rights, the sun had hidden behind the high hills and the red glow of evening was spreading over rocks and snow.

They reached the pass by a narrow and difficult way.

Then Buza, who was going on ahead, suddenly pulled up at a turn of the path, thunderstruck; his dogs immediately lay down. The men rushed up to him, but he neither answered their questions nor took his eyes off something lying hidden under a rock. Empty tents, with the flaps unfastened in a hospitable manner, stood before them in a strange silence. But the Cossack's eyes were fixed on something else.

A Chukchee, dressed in fur and with a spear in his hand, lay face downwards across the pathway. A little farther on a head showed from under a snowdrift, the whites of the eyes shining and the hair dishevelled by the gale; a hand like a claw, clotted with blood, protruded from lower down the drift. Streaks of blood mingled with the red evening glow.

"What does it mean? What is this?"

"Hush! For the love of God, be quiet! Let us escape!" the Cossack exclaimed, looking in consternation at the dogs, which suddenly sat up and began to howl. "Let us escape!" he repeated, turning away.

But Stefan and the priest objected.

"We must see if there is anyone left alive. Perhaps we can help them."

"No, I shan't go; I'm afraid. You can go yourselves. I'll lead the dogs down to the valley. God! . . . God! Thy will be done!"

Stefan took a revolver from the holster and went into the dark interior of a tent. He saw a cold hearth, sprinkled with snow, and, hanging above it, a cauldron with meat which had frozen. Having lighted a match, he perceived a Chukchee lying naked to the waist, with a terrible wound in his chest. "Is there anyone here?" he asked in a trembling voice, not daring to enter the inner tent by the low hanging.

Instead of an answer, he only heard the tent skins rubbing together as the wind tore at them, and the missionary's prayers. He therefore bent down and crawled under the hanging; but he instantly drew back. The whole inner tent seemed to be full of contorted human bodies. He mastered himself, however, took the tallow candle from the priest, and crept in. Here he found the naked bodies of murdered women and children. It must all have happened quite recently, for the blood was still red, the bodies had the look of marble, and the cuts were still wide open; but they were all stark and cold as stone. The frost had finished what the knife had left undone.

One of the young women had evidently tried

to escape. She had torn the outer tent covering and endeavoured to jump out, but had been caught at the entrance; the child, over whom she was bending with an imploring gesture, must have hampered her movements, and she had been run through the back and nailed to the ground with her baby. Stefan looked at her face and recognized his recent guest, Impynena, the wife of Aimurgin.

"This is frightful! Let us escape!" they all exclaimed with one accord, filled with fear and horror.

"Women and children too! There is not a living soul left!"

"Who is it? What can—— ?"

"Oh, don't ask!" Buza said, shaking his head. "I will tell you afterwards; let's go now!"

"At once—in a wind like this and at night?"

"What's to be done? At least it gives us a chance."

They hastily descended. Buza kept his eyes fixed straight in front of him, and dropped them when obliged to turn his head in the direction from which he came. They halted under the rock for a moment, in order to feed the dogs.

"Be sure to keep the wind on your left—always on your left—then wherever you go you will find land. There—round the coast by Pawal—is the easiest. We shall meet there, if only we can hold out till morning. But don't leave the sledge, or the storm will carry you and it away. And don't look behind you—Heaven defend it!

For ' They ' don't like it, and will come after you," he added significantly.

Once more they plunged into the blizzard. Once more the snow encircled their feet like hissing adders, the smarting sensation began again, and they drew their breath with difficulty. To complete the misfortune, twilight set in with the gale. The evening glow rested lower and lower on the rocks, while dark clouds rose steadily from the " open sea," where the country lies whence " no one has ever come back." The tired dogs went unwillingly. Stefan was continually obliged to jump up and urge them on with his heavy ice-spear. When the evening glow had disappeared and the stars shone out, the gale, which seemed to have been only waiting for the signal, rose with such violence that, heedless of everything, the poor animals turned and ran before it. For a long way Stefan ploughed the snow with the sharp ice-spear, leaning his full weight against it, and hanging to the sledge, which rushed along, rocking and bumping. At last, when they lighted on softer ground, he succeeded in stopping it. The dogs lay down at once. Without letting the reins go out of his hand, he stood up and looked round. Before him rose a white, jagged ice-wall, and the light of the stars showed the clouds from the " open sea " hanging over it. The coast had disappeared somewhere, and on all sides the country was white and flat.

"We have come a long way! . . . Józef, are you cold? How you are shivering! Get up; can you eat something?"

"I am cold. Is it still far?"

"I don't know; the wind carried us away. Can you get up?"

Józef was silent and did not stir.

Stefan shook the snow off him, turned the sledge and put the dogs in readiness, rousing them by his voice and by blows of the ice-spear. He skilfully did all this crawling on his knees, for when he stood up the wind blew him over. At last the dogs got up and limped on. He remembered that he ought to keep the wind on his left, but the shore along which he had been driving was nowhere to be seen. There was nothing but the white plain, the fury of the gale, and the stars in the sky. This wind seemed at times like some powerful winnowing-fan, violently driving them into the sea. When it struck the bed of the sledge, it lifted it up like a sheet of paper, and whatever it tore from it instantly disappeared. First they lost their bag of biscuits, then the cushions; finally Józef fell out and the storm carried him off like a bag of down. Stefan was horror-struck as he watched him helplessly waving his arms and trying in vain to stand upright. Shouting despairingly, he turned the dogs in pursuit of his companion. They rushed madly after the object rolling before them, and, fearing

that they would tear him to pieces if they caught him up, Stefan cried:

"Face the wind! Flat against the ground!"

The wind carried his words, and Józef evidently heard them, for he began to twist round until he gained a foothold in the snow. Stefan instantly struck the ice-spear into the ice with his full strength, so that the sledge shook.

"Crawl! I can't leave the dogs!" he called to Józef.

The latter answered something and tried to get up, but the wind blew him over. In the end he managed to turn and face it.

"Crawl—crawl!" His companion's voice was borne to him in a whisper in the blasts of the snowstorm.

"Leave me—never mind me—I can't——" he answered, but almost before they had left his lips the gale blew his words in the opposite direction.

Finally, by a great effort, he began to crawl. All this took some time, and meanwhile a rumbling sound deeper than the storm was added to the roar of the wind. This came from the pack ice in the direction of the clouds hanging over the "open sea." Stefan heard it, but did not realize what it was until the ice was struck with a crash like thunder.

"The sea!" he cried.

Józef was now near the sledge.

"Make haste!" he exclaimed, helping him

into the sledge and strapping him to it. "Do you hear? That's the sea! The storm is breaking up the ice behind us."

They plodded on once more. Stefan walked nearly all the time, pushing the sledge, but tied to it by the waist for safety. He forgot that he was cold or that his limbs might become frost-bitten. The dogs exerted all their strength, scenting the danger. Every minute the roar came nearer; it sounded like a cannonade above the noise of the wind. Driven by despair, they fled ever faster. Yet at last the ice rocked under them, and in imagination they saw the water bubbling under their feet. It was close behind them; but the ice on which they were driving was still dry.

"Throw out everything—clothes as well as food! Throw them all out of the sledge!" Stefan shouted, scarcely able to keep pace with the terrified dogs. Bags, implements of all kinds, and furs flew away into the darkness. The lightened sledge sped forward rapidly, and Stefan was only just in time to throw himself on to it beside Józef; the dogs needed no rein or guiding.

"You will die through my fault, Stefan; forgive me," Józef said. "When I think of that, I want to jump out of the sledge and go back into the storm; but I expect you would not let me, would you?"

"What's the use of talking nonsense! We

shall die together as we have lived together. A year sooner or later . . . ! But we shall be buried in graves—never fear, we shall get back all right! Besides, the wind is going down. Can that be the coast?" he exclaimed, as he looked up.

Close above them rose a dark belt of rocks. Quickly they climbed up on to this firm ground, and while sheltering there, half dead with exhaustion, they watched the white ice-floes below packing with a loud roar. Stefan went to look for wood, and found a tree trunk not far away, from which he broke off a few splinters and lighted a small fire. The wind soon changed this into a bonfire, and for the rest of the night they slept beside it.

Buza found them there at daybreak.

"Are you alive? Thank God! It's a good thing that I didn't allow you to take anything away with you from there, or we should never have come off safe and sound. For this is just their 'bad weather.' It's the crime that made it bad. We didn't even make a fire, for I am afraid of the Chukchee. Didn't you light one? We saw a fire in this direction."

"We lighted one, for we haven't any of our things left, and nothing to eat. We should have been frozen."

They related how they had lost everything, and how the sea had chased them.

"Ah! that was not the sea—it wasn't the sea!" Buza sighed. "If only we get home safely. . . ."

Sadly they returned along the cliffs. They were obliged to make a wide circle, for the wind had blown them far beyond Pawal. They were unable to light fires, and drove on without resting as long as the dogs' strength held out. Buza continually cast anxious looks about him.

Suddenly the dogs growled fiercely, and ran so fast towards the rocks that Buza was scarcely able to hold them.

"It only needed this!" he cried with pale lips. "A rock-spirit!"

A dark brown, unmoving face looked through a crevice in the rock.

"Make the sign of the Cross over him, Father!"

With trembling hands the missionary made the sign of the Cross; but the head did not disappear. Stefan held in his dogs, which were straining at their harness. He looked fixedly at the head.

"Otowaka! is that you?" he cried at last, when an old Chukchee, thin and pale, came out, leading a little boy by the hand.

"It is I . . . Otowaka . . . Kituwia . . ." he said; but his lips were too parched to continue, and he merely waved his hand towards the distant Peweka. "The Great Spirit would not allow my family to perish without an avenger. I will go with you and be baptized, and bring him up."

He laid his hand on the head of the boy, whose face suddenly took a disdainful expression, reminding Stefan strikingly of Kituwia's stony face.

THE RETURNING WAVE

By BOLESŁAW PRUS (ALEXSANDER GŁOWACKI)

Chapter I

If Pastor Boehme's worthiness could have been weighed on a pair of scales, the reverend gentleman would have been obliged to travel on a goods truck. But as worthiness cannot be classified under any of the three mathematical dimensions, but comes under the fourth, which does not belong to the world of realities, he travelled in a little one-horse britzka instead.

To the fat, well-groomed pony, the flies, the heavy collar, the sultry day, and the dusty road were of much greater interest than the virtues of his master, or even his whip. His master took the whip with him only for fear of being laughed at, for he never used it. In fact, he would have been unable to use it; for when he exhibited his worthy personality, with its short whiskers, panama hat, and white and pink percoline coat, on the roads, he had to hold the reins firmly in one hand to prevent the old pony from stumbling, and with the other he poured out continual and benevolent, but ineffectual blessings

on all passers-by. For they all took off their caps to him; regardless of religious differences they liked the " worthy German."

On this particular July afternoon the reverend gentleman was on his way to perform one of his minor spiritual duties, namely that of first grieving his neighbour and then comforting him. In short, he was going to see his friend Gottlieb Adler, to inform him that his son, Ferdinand, had run into debt abroad, and subsequently to exhort the father to forgive his prodigal son.

Gottlieb Adler was the owner of a cotton-mill. The road along which the pastor was driving connected the mill with the railway-station; it was a well-kept road, though it had not been planted with trees. A little country town lay on the left, and the factory on the right, at some distance. The black and red roofs of the workmen's cottages peeped from the sheltering plane-trees, limes and poplars; behind them lay a large four-storied building in the shape of a horseshoe. This was the factory. A thicker clump of trees close by indicated Adler's garden; it surrounded an elegant villa with some farm buildings attached. The sun was flooding everything with golden light. The tall red-brick chimney sent out thick, curling smoke, and had the wind been in his direction the pastor would have heard the busy roar of the engines and the noise of the power-looms. But as it was, nothing

disturbed the peaceful silence except the whistle of a distant train and the rattling of his own cart. A quail diving into the corn was singing its little song.

The constant attention needed to prevent the fat pony from stumbling at last wore out the pastor; so trusting to the mercy of Him who delivered Daniel from the lions' den and Jonah from the whale's belly, he tied the reins to the back of the seat, and folded his hands as in prayer. Boehme loved to dream, and a gentle doze helped to open memory's enchanted gates. He now recalled (probably for the hundredth time that year and at the same spot) another factory, somewhere in the plains of Brandenburg, where he and his friend Gottlieb Adler had spent their childhood. They were sons of fairly well-to-do master-weavers, were born in the same year, and went to the same elementary school. A quarter of a century passed after they left it before they met again. Boehme had finished his theological studies at the University of Tübingen, and Adler had amassed some twenty thousand thalers.

On Polish soil, far away from their Fatherland, they met again. Boehme had been appointed pastor of a Protestant parish, and Adler had set up a little cotton-mill. Another quarter of a century had now passed, during which they had never been separated; they visited each other several times every week. Adler's little mill had grown into a huge factory which at the

moment employed some six hundred workmen, and brought him in a clear profit of several thousand roubles a year. Boehme had remained poor except for the profit of several thousand blessings yearly.

The two friends also differed in other respects. The pastor had a son who was now finishing his studies at the technical college at Riga, and who looked forward to supporting himself, his parents and his sister for the rest of their lives. Adler's only son had never even completed his school course; he was now travelling abroad, and his only concern was to get as much as he could for himself out of his father's money. While the pastor was fairly satisfied with his several thousand blessings a year, and only wondered sometimes whether his daughter, aged eighteen, would marry well, Adler was ever impatient for his banking account to reach the desired sum of a million roubles as quickly as possible, and he often worried himself with thoughts as to what would ultimately become of his son.

At the present moment Boehme was quite content to look at the cornfields around him and the sky above—scattered with white and grey clouds—and to recall the memories of childhood; a similar factory in the shape of a horseshoe, the same kind of trees, and the same villa with a pond in the garden. . . . What a pity there was no village school here, no almshouses, no

hospital! Adler had forgotten to build these, although he had copied the shape of the Brandenburg factory. "Had there not been a school there," the pastor reflected, "Adler would never have been a millionaire, nor I a pastor."

The britzka was now approaching the factory, and the noise became audible and roused the musing pastor. A group of dirty children in ragged dresses or only in shirts were playing in the road. Vans with cotton goods became visible behind the wall which surrounded the yard, and Adler's villa appeared to the left in all its elegance. The pastor could now distinctly see the summer-house in the garden, near the pond, where he and his friend usually sat drinking their hock and talking of old times and current news.

Here and there the washing was hanging out of the windows of the workmen's cottages. The inhabitants were nearly all at work at the mill; only a few pale, hollow-cheeked women greeted the pastor with the words:

"May the Lord be praised!"

"For ever and ever!" he answered, raising his battered old panama hat.

Meanwhile the britzka had turned to the left, for the pony, needing no further guiding, trotted into the courtyard of the villa residence. A groom came out at once, wiped his nose on his sleeve, and helped the pastor out.

"Is your master at home?"

"He is at the factory; I'll run and tell him you are here, sir."

The pastor entered the portico. Having divested himself of his coat, the reverend gentleman now revealed himself in a long frock-coat which made his short legs look still shorter, while the long nose adorning his faded face seemed to grow in proportion. The pastor folded his hands and waited, reminding himself of the object of his visit, and rehearsing a well-thought-out address, which was to be divided into three parts according to the laws of rhetoric. The introductory part dealt with the unfathomable ways of Providence which lead human beings along thorny paths to eternal joy; the second part dwelt on the story of young Ferdinand Adler, who was unable to return to the paternal home until his creditors had been satisfied. . . . This was likely to produce an outburst of wrath on the part of the father, and a long list of Ferdinand's misdoings. But when the angry cotton-spinner would be on the point of disinheriting his son, there would follow the third part of the pastor's address, which would include a reconciliation. Boehme intended to allude to the story of the Prodigal Son, to touch lightly on the fact that his friend was himself responsible for Ferdinand's bad upbringing, and that in expiation of this sin he should offer the sum demanded by the creditors as a sacrifice.

While the pastor was rehearsing his plan of action, Adler appeared. He was huge and of clumsy build, already slightly bent; with large feet, a big round nose, and thick lips like those of a negro. He had thin fair whiskers and no moustache, and was dressed in a long grey frock-coat of an unfashionable cut, and trousers to match. When he took off his hat in order to mop the perspiration off his forehead, he showed tow-coloured, closely cropped hair, and projecting light blue eyes without eyebrows.

The millionaire walked with a heavy tread like a trooper; his big arms stood out from his body like the ribs of some antediluvian animal. His broad chest heaved and fell like a pair of smith's bellows as he greeted the pastor from a distance with phlegmatic nods and loud guffaws; but he did not smile. Indeed, it would have been difficult to imagine what a smile would look like on this fleshy, apathetic face which Nature had fashioned so roughly. Yet it was not repulsive, merely rather strange; it did not inspire fear, only the feeling that opposition to those clumsy hands would be useless. Obviously it was impossible to get at the heart of this battering-ram in human form, but, if injured, the whole fabric would collapse like a building the foundations of which had crumbled away.

"How are you, Martin?" Adler called from the lowest step of the staircase. Shaking the

pastor's hand firmly, he went on: "Ah, of course, you were in Warsaw yesterday. . . . Have you heard anything of my boy? The rascal writes so rarely. . . . Probably the only person who knows his whereabouts is the banker."

As they stood together in the portico, the little pastor looked, beside his friend, like "a locust beside a camel."

"Well, tell me," Adler continued, sitting down on a little cast-iron seat; its metallic sound as it creaked under his weight harmonized strangely with the thundering roar of the factory. "Has Ferdinand not written to the bank?"

Boehme found himself plunged unwillingly into the middle of his business. Sitting down on the seat facing Adler, he remembered with marvellous presence of mind the opening part of his speech—namely the unfathomable ways of Providence.

The pastor had one drawback; this was that he could not speak fluently without his glasses, which he was in the habit of mislaying. He felt that he ought now to begin the introduction; but how was he to begin without his glasses? He cleared his throat and fidgeted, turned out his pockets and found nothing. Where could he have left his spectacles? He quite forgot his opening sentences.

Adler, who knew his friend by heart, began to feel uneasy.

"Why are you fidgeting like that?" he asked.

"I am sorry—it is very annoying—I have left my spectacles behind."

"What do you want your spectacles for? You are not going to preach a sermon, are you?"

"No, but you see——"

"I am asking about Ferdinand—any news of him?"

"I will tell you presently," Boehme said, grimacing. Again he put his hand into his breast pocket, and took out a letter and a large purse, but no spectacles.

"I wonder if I left them in the britzka," he said, turning towards the steps.

Adler, who knew that the pastor carried only important documents in his breast pocket, snatched the letter from his hand.

"My dear Gottlieb," Boehme said, confused; "give me back the letter; I will read it to you myself, but I must first find my glasses."

He ran out into the courtyard, but returned in dismay a few minutes later, not having found them.

Adler was reading the letter with great interest; the veins stood out on his forehead, and his eyes seemed to project more than ever.

When he had finished he spat on the floor.

"What a scoundrel, this Ferdinand! . . ." he burst out. "In two years' time he is fifty-eight thousand and thirty-one roubles in debt, though I gave him a yearly allowance of ten thousand roubles."

"Ah, I know!" suddenly exclaimed the pastor, and ran off. "I couldn't have left them anywhere but in the pocket of my overcoat."

He returned triumphantly.

"You are always mislaying your spectacles and finding them again," grumbled Adler, leaning his head on his hand. He looked thoughtful and sad.

"Fifty-eight and twenty—that's seventy-eight thousand and thirty-one roubles in two years. How shall I be able to make that up? By Heaven, I don't know."

Meanwhile the pastor had put on his spectacles and regained his usual presence of mind. Though the introduction and the second part of his speech had been lost, there was still the third part left. Boehme was always resourceful in a difficulty, so he cleared his throat, and began:

"Although, dear Gottlieb, your feelings as a father may be deeply wounded, and you may sometimes justly complain——"

Adler roused himself from his reverie, and replied calmly:

"It's more than mere complaining; I have to pay. Johann!" he suddenly shouted, with a voice that shook the roof of the portico.

The footman appeared.

"A glass of water!"

He emptied two glasses, and then said without a shade of excitement: "I must telegraph to Rothschilds' to-night. I will send that rascal

a wire too; he must come back; he has had enough travelling."

Boehme realized that not only the chance of the third part of his speech was gone, but that Adler was treating his son far too indulgently. To incur debts of nearly sixty thousand roubles was not only a financial loss, but an abuse of parental confidence, and therefore no light offence. Who knows? If it had not been for this money, Adler might have been persuaded to found a school for the children, without which they were growing up idle and wild. Instead of standing up for the frivolous son, the pastor would now become his censor, which was all the easier for him as he had known him from his childhood. Moreover, he had now recovered his spectacles and his balance of mind.

Adler was leaning back with his hands clasped behind his head, looking at the ceiling. Boehme put his hand on his knee and began:

"My dear Gottlieb, your Christian submission in misfortune sets an excellent example; but as we are very imperfect in the sight of God, it is our duty not only to be resigned, but to be active. Our Lord not only sacrificed Himself, but taught and improved men. Ferdinand is your son in the flesh, and mine in the spirit. In spite of his gifts and good qualities, he does not carry out the injunctions to work which were laid upon man when he was driven from Paradise."

"Johann!" shouted Adler.

The footman instantly appeared.

"The engine is going too fast; tell them to slacken down! It's always like that when I am out of the way."

The footman disappeared, and the pastor continued, undismayed:

"Your son does not work, but wastes the powers of body and mind given him by the Creator. I have told you my principles on this point many times, and in educating my son Józef I have endeavoured to be faithful to them."

Adler shook his head gloomily.

"What is Józef going to do when he leaves the technical college?" he asked unexpectedly.

"Go into an engineering business or factory, and perhaps in time become a director."

"And when he is a director?"

"He will go on working."

"What for?"

Boehme was taken aback.

"In order to be useful to himself and others," he replied.

"Well, if Ferdinand comes back he can be a director here with me; and he is already useful to others by spending seventy-eight thousand and thirty-one roubles—and certainly to himself!"

"But he does not work."

"That is true, but I work for him and for myself. I have done the work of five all my

life; why shouldn't he enjoy himself? He won't do it later on; I know that by my own experience. Work is a curse; I have borne it all these years, and I have borne it well, as my fortune proves. If Ferdinand was meant to work hard, as I have done, why should God have given him the money? What will the boy get out of it if he spends his life in adding ten millions to the one I have made, and his son in adding another ten? God has created rich and poor; the rich enjoy life. I myself shall probably never enjoy it; I am too old, and I don't know how to. But why shouldn't my boy enjoy it?"

"My dear Gottlieb," said the pastor, "a good Christian——"

"Johann," interrupted the cotton-spinner, addressing the returning footman and observing that the engine went more slowly, "take a bottle of hock and some cakes into the summer-house. Martin——" He tapped Boehme's shoulder with his heavy hand and guffawed.

On their way into the garden a wretched-looking woman stopped them and threw herself at their feet.

"Please, sir, give me three roubles for the funeral," she sobbed.

Adler calmly drew away.

"Go to the publican," he said; "that's where your fool of a husband wastes his money."

"Oh, sir——"

" Business matters are attended to in the office, not here," interrupted Adler. " Go there."

" I have been there, sir, but they turned me out."

Again she stretched out her arms to embrace his feet.

" Go away !" shouted the manufacturer. " You won't come to work, but you know where to beg for your christenings and funerals."

" How could I come to work, sir, just after my confinement ?"

" Well then, don't have children if you have no money for their funerals."

With this he pushed the pastor, who was indignant at this scene, through the garden gate. When he had closed it, Boehme stood still.

" I would rather not drink, Gottlieb," he said.

" Oh !" said Adler, wondering.

" The tears of the poor spoil the taste of the wine."

" You need not be afraid; the glasses are clean and the bottles well corked," Adler guffawed.

The pastor flushed, turned away, and hurried into the courtyard without a word.

" Come back, you silly woman !" Adler shouted to the miserable creature, who was crying near the gate. " Here is a rouble, and be off with you !"

He threw her a paper rouble.

" Martin ! Boehme ! . . . Come back, the wine is in the summer-house."

But the pastor had got into his cart without his overcoat, and was driving out of the gateway.

"He is a madman," Adler observed to himself. He was not angry with the pastor, who frequently treated him to such scenes.

"These learned people always have a screw loose in their heads," he reflected, looking after the dust raised by the pastor's britzka. "If I were a learned man and had Boehme's income, Ferdinand would now be toiling in a technical college. It is a good thing he is not learned, either."

He turned round, glanced at the stable, where a groom was making a pretence of sweeping, sniffed in the smoke from the factory, looked at the loaded vans, and went into the office.

He ordered a clerk to credit Ferdinand's account with sixty thousand roubles, and wired him instructions to pay his debts and to come home at once.

When Adler left the office, the old German book-keeper, who wore a shade over his eyes and had sat on the same leather stool for many years, looked round suspiciously and whispered to the clerk:

"So we are going to 'economize' again. The young man has spent sixty thousand roubles, and we are going to pay for it."

In a quarter of an hour's time the rumour had reached the engine-house, and in an hour had

spread all over the factory, that Adler was going to cut down the wages because his son had squandered a hundred thousand roubles. By the evening Adler knew all that was being said. Some threatened to break his bones, others that they would kill him or set fire to the factory. Some said they would leave, but these were shouted down; for where was one to go? The women wept and the men cursed Adler, invoking God's punishment on him. The cotton-spinner was satisfied. As long as the workpeople cursed they would do nothing worse. He could safely reduce their wages. Those who threatened were chiefly his most faithful men.

During the night a plan of "economy" was prepared. The more a man earned, the larger was the percentage knocked off his wages. There was a general outburst of indignation when these plans became known next day. For some years a bone-setter had been appointed to the factory for urgent cases, and during an outbreak of cholera a doctor had been added. The latter had now nothing to do according to Adler's ideas, and was given notice, and the bone-setter's salary was reduced by half. Both left the factory at once. Some score of workmen followed their example; others did less work than usual, but talked the more. At midday and again in the evening a deputation of workmen waited upon Adler to entreat him not to wrong them in this

way. They wept, cursed and threatened, but Adler remained unmoved.

As he had lost sixty thousand roubles through his son, economy would have to bring him in at least fifteen to twenty thousand a year. Nothing could alter this resolution. Besides, why should he alter it? He was not risking anything.

As a matter of fact, the workmen calmed down. Some went to work of their own accord, others were sent away and their places taken by new hands, to whom the wages seemed good. There was a great deal of poverty in the district, and people were asking for employment. The place of the bone-setter was taken "for the present" by an old workman who, in Adler's opinion, was sufficiently acquainted with surgery to attend to slight injuries. As to graver cases —and these were rare—it was agreed to send for the doctor from the town, and the sick workmen and their wives and children were to go there at their own expense. So after this great upheaval matters were all right again at the factory.

Information carefully collected showed Adler that, in spite of all the wrongs he had done his workmen, nothing was going to happen to him—that there was in fact no power on earth which could do him harm.

The pastor, however, to whom Adler went without waiting to make up their difference, shook his head, and shifting his spectacles, said:

"Wrong begets wrong, my dear Gottlieb. You have neglected Ferdinand's education, and you did wrong. He has squandered your money, and you have reduced the workmen's wages in consequence, and done a greater wrong. What will be the end of it all?"

"Nothing," said Adler.

"It cannot be nothing," said Boehme, solemnly raising his hands. "The Almighty has so ordered things that every beginning has an end. Good beginning, good end; bad beginning, bad end."

"Not for me," said the cotton-spinner. "My capital is safely invested, the hands won't burn the mill, and if they do it is insured. If they leave, I shall find others. Besides, where could they go? Or do you think they will kill me? Martin . . . do you really think they will?" the giant guffawed, clapping his huge hands together.

"Do not tempt God," the pastor said angrily, and changed the conversation.

Chapter II

The history of Adler was as strange as he himself. After leaving the elementary school he had learnt weaving, and by the time he was twenty he was earning quite good wages. He was a strong fellow with a high complexion, to all appearances clumsy, but in reality shrewd and able to work like a horse. His seniors were satisfied with him,

though they often found fault with him for being too dissipated. Adler spent every Sunday enjoying himself with friends and with women; they would go on merry-go-rounds and see-saws, gorge themselves and drink together; he was always the leader of the party. He enjoyed himself so frantically that his companions were sometimes quite taken aback. But on week-days he worked quite as frantically. His powerful organism seemed to possess no soul; only nerves and muscles were at play. He did not like reading or art of any kind; he could not even sing.

No other thought possessed him than that of using his accumulated animal strength to the full without bounds or limits, except envy for the rich. He heard that there were large cities in the world, with beautiful women ready to be loved, with whom one drank champagne in gorgeously decorated rooms; that rich people rode fast horses to death, climbed mountains on which one might break one's neck or drop from exhaustion, and sailed their own yachts—and he longed to do all these things. He dreamt of scouring the world from pole to pole, of rushing on to battlefields thirsting for the enemy's blood; besides these things he meant to drink the choicest wines, eat the richest food, and travel with a whole harem. But how was all this going to happen if he spent all his earnings, and even ran

into debt? Then suddenly an unusual thing happened.

A fire broke out on the second floor of one of the factory buildings. All the workpeople had got away safely except two women and a boy on the fourth floor. These were only noticed after a time, when the flames were bursting forth from all parts of the building. Nobody thought of going to the rescue; this induced the mill-owner to shout to the crowd: "Three hundred thalers to anyone who rescues them!"

The noise and excitement increased. The people encouraged one another to the venture, but did nothing, while the victims held out their arms in despair, entreating for help.

Then Adler stepped forward. He asked for a rope and a ladder with hooks, tied the rope round his waist, and approached the burning building. The crowd drew back in astonishment; they wondered how he meant to reach the fourth floor. He hooked the ladder to the broad cornices of each floor above him and ran up it like a cat. The flames singed his hair and clothes, thick smoke enveloped him like a blanket. But he climbed higher and higher, hanging like a spider over the flames and the chasm below. When he reached the fourth floor the crowd shouted and applauded. Adler fixed the ladder to the parapet on the roof, and, with surprising skill for a youth so clumsy and heavy, carried the people, who

were half dead with fright, one after the other on to the roof. As one wall of the building had no windows, Adler let the rescued people down on that side with the help of the rope, and finally slid down himself. When he reached the ground, burnt and with bleeding hands, the crowd lifted him upon their shoulders.

As a reward for this almost unparalleled bravery, Adler received the gold medal from the Government, and a rise in wages as well as the three hundred thalers from the mill-owner.

This became a turning-point in his life. Finding himself in possession of such a large sum, a desire for money grew in him. He did not value it because he had risked his life for it, or because it reminded him that he had saved the life of others. To him it simply represented a sum of three hundred thalers. What a time he might have if he spent three hundred thalers on enjoying himself! But if he first increased it to a thousand he might have a still better time. Adler gave up his old dissipated habits and became niggardly and a usurer. He started lending his friends money for short terms, but at high interest; and as he worked hard besides, and was getting on fast, after a few years he possessed, not three hundred, but three thousand thalers. All this was done with the idea that when he had amassed a considerable sum he would enjoy himself like a rich man. But—as the sum increased, he

decided on ever new limits, towards which he advanced with the same determination as before.

While striving towards this "ideal" of the greatest possible self-indulgence, he lost his sensual instincts, as a matter of fact. He spent his gigantic strength in hard work, suppressed his dreams, and fixed his thoughts on one thing only, and that was money. In the beginning the money had represented the means to another end, but by degrees even this disappeared, and his whole soul was filled with the desire for work and money.

When he was forty years old he possessed fifty thousand thalers gained by real hard work, determination, uncommon shrewdness, meanness and usury. He then went to Poland, where, he had heard, industry could be turned to the greatest profit, and started a small cotton-mill. He married a rich heiress, who died after a year in giving birth to a son, Ferdinand; and having her money to work with, Adler set out to become a millionaire. His new home proved a veritable land of promise, for he was well trained in his exhausting business and in the race for money, and found himself among people who let themselves be exploited: some because they had no money; others because they had come by it too easily and had too much, or they were not shrewd enough, or again because they tried to be cleverer than they were. Adler despised these people who possessed neither the most elementary economic

qualities nor the strength to carry through their aims. Having surveyed his ground thoroughly, he knew how to make capital out of it. So his fortune grew, and people thought that the successful manufacturer was backed up by money from Germany.

With the birth of Ferdinand a new feeling awoke in Adler's stony heart—a feeling of unbounded and eternal love. He carried the motherless baby about in his arms, and even used to take him to the mill with him, where the frightened child got blue in the face with screaming. When he grew bigger, the father satisfied all his wishes, stuffed him with sweets, surrounded him with servants, and gave him sovereigns to play with.

The more the child developed, the more he loved him. Ferdinand's games reminded him of his own childhood, of his own instincts and dreams. He pictured to himself that it would be his son who would enjoy life and reap the real benefit of the money. Ferdinand would reach the goal of his own desires, not yet extinct, for distant travels, dangerous expeditions and expensive tastes.

" Only let him be grown up," the father thought, " then I will sell the mill and we will go out into the world together; he will enjoy himself, and I shall look on and see that he comes to no harm."

As a human being cannot give to others more than he himself possesses, Adler gave to his son

an iron constitution, selfish propensities, money, and an unbounded desire for enjoyment. He developed no higher instincts in him. Neither father nor son had any understanding for the true values of life; they cared nothing for beauty in Nature or in Art, and they both despised their fellow-men.

In the social life of the community, where every unit is consciously or unconsciously tied by a thousand bonds of sympathy and fellow-feeling, these two stood alone. The father loved money above all things, and his son above money; the son liked his father, but loved only himself and the things which satisfied his instincts.

The boy had his tutors, and went to school for a few years. He learnt several languages, was a fair talker and a good dancer, and dressed in good taste. As he got on easily with people when they put no obstacles in his way, was witty and spent money lavishly, he was popular; though Boehme, who looked at things from a different point of view, maintained that the boy knew very little and was on the wrong track. Ferdinand was a Don Juan even in his seventeenth year; in his eighteenth he was expelled from school. A year later he had incurred debts at cards, and at twenty he went abroad. In spite of large sums allowed him by his father, he ran into debt to the tune of sixty thousand roubles. He had thus indirectly brought about the need

for "economy" at the factory, and caused himself and his father to be cursed by the workpeople.

During his few years' absence from home, Ferdinand had climbed Alpine glaciers and Vesuvius, had been up in a balloon, and allowed himself to be bored for a few weeks in London, where houses are built of red brick and there are no amusements on Sundays. But the longest and gayest time he had spent in Paris.

He did not often write to his father; only when a stronger impression than usual touched his iron nerves he reported it to him in detail. These letters therefore were great events in Adler's life. The old mill-owner read them again and again, and enjoyed every word of them; they revived in him the ardent dreams of long ago. To go up in a balloon or look down into the crater of a volcano; to join in a cancan or give a woman champagne baths; to lose or win hundreds of roubles at one throw—had these not been the ideals of his life? Did not Ferdinand even surpass them? Under the influence of these letters, sketched in the excitement of first impressions, the habit of dreaming came back to this sternly realistic mind. At times he distinctly visualized what he read, investing it with an almost poetic fancy, but the vision fled before the rhythmic throb of the engines and power-looms. Adler had only one longing, one hope and faith—to

amass a million, sell his mill, and go away with his son to see the world.

"He will enjoy himself, and I shall look on all day long."

Pastor Boehme was not at all in favour of this programme, worthy of the corrupt Elders of Sodom and Gomorrah, or the Roman Empire.

"When you have come to the end of the money and the pleasure, what will you do then?"

"Ah, but money like ours does not come to an end," the mill-owner would reply.

Chapter III

The day for Ferdinand's return had arrived. Adler got up at five o'clock in the morning according to his custom, drank his coffee at eight from his large china mug, inscribed with the motto: "Mit Gott für König und Vaterland," and visited the factory. At eleven he sent the carriage and a luggage cart to the station, and then sat down in the portico and waited, his face as apathetic and dull as usual. From time to time he looked at his watch. The sun was hot; the scent of mignonette and acacia from the courtyard mingled with the pungent smell of smoke from the factory. The sky was clear and the air quite still. Adler wiped the perspiration from his face, and kept changing his position on the iron seat. The old mill-owner did not eat

his lunch at twelve, and did not drink his beer out of the big pot with the pewter lid, as he had done every day for forty years.

At one o'clock the carriage with Ferdinand arrived, followed by the empty cart. Ferdinand was a tall, rather thin, but strongly built young man with fair hair and blue eyes. He wore a Scotch cap with ribbons and a light circular cape. As soon as he saw him, the mill-owner drew up his huge figure to its full height, and holding out his arms and giving one of his big laughs, exclaimed:

"Well, Ferdinand, how are you?"

The son jumped out of the carriage, embraced his father and kissed him on both cheeks.

"Has it been raining here, that you have your trousers turned up?" he said.

The father glanced at his trousers.

"Ha, ha! How the rascal notices everything!" he roared. "Johann! Lunch!"

He took his son's cape and travelling bag, and gave him his arm as if he were a lady. Looking back into the courtyard, he asked: "Why, the cart is empty! Why haven't you brought your luggage from the station?"

"My luggage? Why, father, do you think I am married and drag about boxes and portmanteaux with me? My things are in the dressing-bag; besides the fittings, there are a couple of shirts and a few pairs of gloves—that's all."

He talked vivaciously and in a loud voice, and laughed much. Pressing his father's hand several times, he continued: "Well, and how are you, father? What's the news? I am told you are doing very well with your piqués and dimities. . . . Let us sit down."

They clinked their glasses and finished their lunch quickly. When they had retired to the study, Ferdinand said, lighting a cigar:

"I must introduce the French way of living here, and especially the French way of cooking."

The father made a grimace.

"Why? Isn't the German cuisine good enough?"

"The Germans are pigs!"

"What?" said the old man.

"I say the Germans are pigs," laughed the son. "They neither know how to eat nor how to enjoy themselves."

"Well," interrupted the father, "and what are you?"

"I? I am a human being—in other words, a citizen of the world."

That his son should call himself cosmopolitan mattered little to Adler, but he was much hurt by the wholesale relegation of Germans to the class of unclean animals.

"I thought, my dear Ferdinand, that you might have learnt some sense for the sixty thousand roubles you have spent."

The son flung away his cigar and fell on his father's neck.

"What an excellent father you are!" he exclaimed, kissing him. "What a fine example of a real, stereotyped, conservative Baron! Well, don't frown—cheer up! Come, don't look so glum!"

He seized him by his hands and drew him into the middle of the room. Tapping his chest, he said:

"What a chest! . . . what calves! If I had a young wife, I should know who to be jealous of. And you really mean to say all the same that you agree with these dead and stale theories? 'The devil take the Germans and their cookery!' That is a motto worthy of the age and of strong men."

"You must be crazy," interrupted the father, somewhat pacified. "But what are you if you have ceased to be a German?"

"I?" replied Ferdinand with mock seriousness. "Among Germans I am a Polish nobleman, Adler von Adlersdorf; among Frenchmen I am a republican and a democrat."

Such was Ferdinand's first meeting with his father, and such were the spiritual gains of his stay abroad, paid for with sixty thousand roubles.

On the same day father and son drove over to see Pastor Boehme. The mill-owner introduced Ferdinand to him as a converted sinner who had

spent much money and gained much experience for it. The pastor tenderly embraced his godson and held up to him as an example his son, Józef, who was working hard, and would continue to work to the end of his life. Ferdinand replied that work was really the only thing that gave human beings the right to exist. He added that he himself had been a little inconsiderate in spending his life among the people of a nation which boasted of its levity and idleness. Finally he asserted that one Englishman worked as much as two Frenchmen or three Germans, and that he had for this reason lately acquired a great respect for the English. Adler was astonished at his son's earnestness and the sincerity of his conviction, and Boehme remarked that young wine must ferment and that his experienced eye could detect a change for the better in Ferdinand, which was worth more than the expenditure of sixty thousand roubles. After these solemn words the old people, with the addition of the Frau Pastor, sat down to a bottle of hock, and talked of their children.

"You know, dear Gottlieb," said the pastor, "I am beginning to admire Ferdinand. From being a young windbag of a fellow he has now become a *verus vir*. He has experience and judgment, and knows himself too."

"Oh yes," confirmed the Frau Pastor, "he reminds me altogether of our Józio. Do you

remember, father, when Józio was here last vacation he said the same thing about the English ? Dear boy !"

And the kind, thin lady sighed and pulled at the bodice of her black dress, which seemed to have been made in expectation of greater corpulence.

Ferdinand meanwhile was walking in the garden with Annette, the pretty daughter of the pastor. They had known each other from childhood, and the young girl had greeted the companion, whom she had not seen for so long, warmly and even enthusiastically. They walked about together for nearly an hour; but as the day was very hot, Annette had suddenly complained of a headache and gone up to her room, and Ferdinand returned to the old people. He was sulky and did not talk much. This did not astonish the pastor and his wife. A young man would naturally prefer the society of a young girl. Soon after Adler and his son returned home, and Ferdinand informed his father that he would have to go to Warsaw the next day.

" What for ?" asked his father. " Have you got tired of home in eight hours ?"

" Not in the least; only, you see, I need shirts and some suits, and also a carriage in which I can pay visits in the neighbourhood."

These reasons did not seem conclusive to the elder man. He said that the housekeeper could go to Warsaw to order the clothes; and if he

bought a carriage, he would like to buy it himself from a carriage-builder of his acquaintance. It was difficult to agree about the clothes, but it was finally settled that a suit should be sent to the tailor as a pattern. Ferdinand did not look at all pleased at this.

"I suppose you keep a riding horse?"

"No; what good would it be to me?" replied the mill-owner.

"Well, but I must have one, and I hope you will at least not refuse me this?"

"Of course not."

"I should like to go into the town to-morrow to see if one of the nobility has a good horse for sale. You won't object to that?"

"Not in the least."

By ten o'clock in the morning Ferdinand had left home to go into the town, and a few minutes later Boehme's cart and horse drew up in the courtyard. The pastor seemed unusually excited. When he hurried into the room, there were two flushed spots between his whiskers and his long nose. As soon as he saw Adler, he called out:

"Is Ferdinand at home?"

Adler was astonished, and noticed that his friend's voice was trembling.

"Why? What do you want Ferdinand for?" he asked.

"The scoundrel! He's a bad lot! Do you know what he said to Annette yesterday?"

Adler's face showed that he neither knew nor suspected anything.

"He actually," continued the pastor, getting still more excited, "he asked her . . ." He broke off, and exclaimed indignantly: "The insolence! The shame of it!"

"What is the matter with you?" asked Adler, growing anxious. "What did he say to her?"

"He asked her to leave the window of her room open for him at night."

The poor pastor, from the excess of his feelings, flung his panama hat on the floor.

In matters which had nothing to do with the manufacture and sale of cotton goods Adler took a long time to think. The chord that would have been touched by the wrong done to the girl was missing in his heart; but he had a feeling of friendship for the pastor, and starting from this basis and reasoning phlegmatically and logically, he came to the conclusion that, if the young girl had listened to the proposal, Ferdinand would have to marry her. In any case he would have to marry her; the old man saw no other way out of it.

This then was the end of it! A few hours after his arrival, and a few minutes after his excellent speech about his improvement, Ferdinand had put himself into such a position that he, the son of a millionaire, would have to marry a dowerless girl—the pastor's daughter! Instead

of enjoying life at his side, and seeing him take the best of what money, youth and unrestrained freedom could give, he would now have to marry the boy to this girl.

It was only after the nervous old Boehme had begun to cry in his anger that Adler's wrath burst out in words.

"He is a scoundrel, that fellow!" he shouted. "A week ago I paid sixty thousand roubles for him, and now he extorts more money from me and behaves like this on the top of it all!"

He lifted his hands and shook them like Moses when he threw down the stone tablets on the heads of the worshippers of the golden calf.

"I will thrash him!" roared the mill-owner.

Seeing his excitement, and guessing that a stick in Adler's hand might have deplorable results, the pastor pacified him.

"My dear Gottlieb, that is quite unnecessary. Leave it to me, and I will tell Ferdinand either not to come to our house, or to behave in a decent and Christian way."

"Johann!" shouted the manufacturer, and when the footman appeared he continued without softening his voice: "Send to the town at once for Ferdinand. I will flog the scoundrel!"

The footman looked amazed and frightened, but the pastor gave him a knowing look, and the sagacious Johann went out.

"Dear Gottlieb," said Boehme, "Ferdinand is

too old to be flogged with a stick, or even to be reprimanded too violently. Excessive severity will not only fail to improve him, but may cause him to lay hands on his own life; he is an ambitious boy."

This remark had a sudden effect on Adler. He opened his eyes wide and fell back into a chair.

"What is that you are saying, Martin?" he gasped. "Johann! Water!"

Johann brought the water, and the old man calmed down by degrees. He gave no more orders to fetch Ferdinand.

"Yes, the madcap might do such a thing," he whispered in depression, and dropped his head on his chest.

This strong and energetic old man understood that his son had taken the wrong turning and ought to be led back, but he did not know how to do it.

Late at night Ferdinand returned home in an excellent temper. He looked for his father in all the rooms, left the doors open, and beat a tattoo on tables and chairs with his walking-stick, singing in a loud and false baritone:

"Allons, enfants de la patrie . . ."

He reached the study and stood before his father, with his Scotch cap perched on the back of his head, his waistcoat unbuttoned, and smelling

of wine; sparks of mirth, untempered by reason, were burning in his eyes. When he came to the line

" Aux armes, citoyens !"

his enthusiasm was such that he flourished his cane over his father's head.

The old man was not accustomed to people who waved sticks over him. He sprang up from his chair, and looking fiercely at his son, cried: " You are drunk, you scoundrel !"

Ferdinand stepped back and said coolly: " Please don't call me a scoundrel, father; if I get accustomed to being called such names at home, it might not make the slightest difference to me if anyone else called me or my father these names. One can get accustomed to anything."

The moderate tone and clear exposition did not fail to impress the cotton-spinner.

" You are without honour," he said after a while; " you wanted to seduce old Boehme's daughter."

" Did you think it likely I should try to seduce the mother ?" asked Ferdinand in a tone of astonishment.

" Stop these bad jokes," the father said angrily; " the pastor has been here to-day, and requests that you do not set foot in his house again. He refuses to have anything to do with you."

" What a pity !" Ferdinand laughed, throwing his cap down on a pile of papers, and himself at

full length upon the sofa. "He is really doing me the greatest favour by releasing me from those dull visits. They are a queer lot. The old man believes that he is living among cannibals, and is always converting somebody or rejoicing at somebody's conversion. The old woman has nothing but water on the brain, in which that learned snail, Józio, swims about. The daughter is sacred like an altar at which only pastors are allowed to officiate. When she has had two children, she will be a skeleton like her mother, and then I congratulate her husband. How dreadfully dull and pedantic all these people are!"

"Very well, they may be pedantic," said his father; "but if you had been with them you would not have squandered sixty thousand roubles."

Ferdinand had just started a yawn, but did not finish it. He sat up on the sofa and looked sorrowfully at his father.

"I see, father, you will never forget those few thousand roubles."

"Certainly I shan't forget them," shouted the old man. "How can a man in his right mind spend so much money for devil knows what? I was going to tell you that yesterday."

Ferdinand took his feet off the sofa, smacked his knee with his hand, and feeling that his father's anger did not go very deep, began:

"My dear father, let us for once in our lives

have a reasonable talk. I suppose you do not look upon me any more as a child ?"

" You are a monkey," the old man said abruptly. His heart was touched by his son's seriousness.

" Well then, father, as a man who looks below the surface of things, you probably understand, though you won't confess to it, that I am such as Nature and our family made me. Our family does not consist of such units as the pastor and his son. Our family was once upon a time given the name of ' Adler,'[1] not ' frog ' or ' crab.' If you look at it even from the physical point of view, you can see that it consists of people with huge frames. It possesses a man who has gained millions and an excellent position in a strange country only through the work of his ten fingers. That shows that our family has imagination and strength."

Ferdinand said all this with true or feigned emotion, and his father was much impressed.

" Is it my fault," he went on, gradually raising his voice, " that I have inherited this imagination and this strength from my ancestors ? I must live more fully and do more than a ' stone ' or a ' flower,' or even an ordinary ' bird '—for I am an ' eagle.' I am not satisfied with a narrow corner; I must have the world. My strength requires that I should either have great obstacles to overcome and difficult circumstances to master,

[1] " Eagle."

or else I must have plenty of dissipation. Otherwise I should burst. Men of temperament either wreck empires or become criminals. Bismarck smashed beer-mugs on the heads of the Philistines before he smashed up the Austrian and French Empires. He was then exactly what I am to-day. To rise to the surface and to be a true 'eagle,' I must have suitable circumstances; I am not living in my proper sphere now. I have nothing to fix my attention on, and nothing to wear out my strength; that is why I am so fast. If I weren't, I should die like an eagle in a cage. You have your aims in life; you order about hundreds of workmen, and set engines in motion; you have had a big fight to assert yourself against others and to get your money. I have not even got that pleasure. What is there for me to do?"

"Who prevents you from taking an interest in the factory, or ordering the people about and increasing our capital? That would be a better thing than to go and waste it."

"All right!" exclaimed Ferdinand, jumping up; "give me some of your authority, and I will set to work to-morrow. It will be with really hard work that my wings will grow. Well now, will you give over the management of the factory to me to-morrow? I will take it over, if it's only for something to do; I am tired of this empty life."

Had old Adler had tears to shed, he would have cried for joy, but he had to be satisfied with

pressing his son's hand repeatedly. He had surpassed all his expectations. What a piece of luck that Ferdinand should wish to take over the management of the factory! In a few years their fortune would be doubled, and then they would go out into the world and look for a wider horizon for the young eagle.

The mill-owner slept badly that night. The next morning Ferdinand really went to the mill, and made the round of all the departments. The workmen looked at him with curiosity, and vied with one another in giving him information and carrying out his orders. The jolly, friendly young man, who was quite the opposite to his stern father, made a favourable impression on them. But all the same, at ten o'clock one of the foremen came to the office to complain that the young gentleman was flirting with his wife and behaving improperly with the workwomen.

" Nonsense !" said Adler.

In an hour's time the foreman of the spinning department came running in with a frightened face.

" Pan Adler," he shouted, " Pan Ferdinand has heard that the hands have had their wages reduced, and he is urging them to leave. He is repeating this in all the workrooms, and is telling the hands all sorts of strange things."

" Has the fellow gone out of his mind ?" burst out the mill-owner.

He sent for his son immediately, and ran to meet him. They met in front of the warehouse, Ferdinand with a lighted cigar in his mouth.

"What! you are smoking in the factory? Throw that down at once!" and the old man took it away from him and stamped on it angrily.

"What do you mean? Am I not allowed to smoke a cigar? I—I?"

"Nobody is allowed to smoke inside the factory," bawled Adler. "You will set the place on fire. You are stirring up my workpeople. Get out of this!"

The encounter had many witnesses, and Ferdinand was offended.

"Oh, if you are going to treat me like this, I have done with you. Upon my honour, I won't set foot in your factory again. I have had enough of these pleasant home scenes."

He stamped on his cigar and went into the house without even looking at his father, who was panting hard with mingled feelings of anger and shame.

When they met again at lunch, old Adler said:

"Well, you need not trouble me with your help. I will give you a monthly allowance of three hundred roubles, a carriage, horses and servants, and you can do what you like, provided you promise me to keep away from the mill."

Ferdinand leaned his elbows on the table, and said:

"My dear father, let us talk like reasonable people. I cannot waste my life in this house. I have mentioned to you before that I am threatened with an illness called 'spleen,' and that the doctors have forbidden me to be bored. As our life here is very monotonous, I feel already that I am beginning to fail. I do not want to grieve you, but if I am condemned to death——"

His father was frightened.

"But I am going to give you three hundred roubles a month," he shouted.

Ferdinand made a contemptuous gesture.

"Well, say four hundred, then."

The son shook his head sadly.

"Six hundred—but the devil take you!" screamed Adler, banging the table with his fist. "I cannot give more; the mill economies cannot be strained any further. You will make me bankrupt."

"Well, well, I will try and live on six hundred a month," replied his son. "Oh, I wish my illness would——"

The wretch knew that it was not worth while going to Warsaw with such an income, but that here in the country he could be the king of the local *jeunesse dorée*, and for the present he was satisfied with his part. He was really a very reasonable young man for his age. . . .

From that day onwards Ferdinand began to live very fast again, though on a smaller scale

than before. He paid visits to all the land-owners in the neighbourhood. The more respectable among them did not receive him at all, or received him and did not return his call; for old Adler did not enjoy a good reputation, and his son was known as a ne'er-do-well. Nevertheless he succeeded in scraping up an acquaintance with several younger and elderly gentlemen of his own type, whom he met frequently in the little country town, or entertained ostentatiously at his father's house, where the cuisine and cellars greatly attracted them.

The old manufacturer would slip away during these festivities. Though the titles and perfect manners of some of Ferdinand's friends flattered his pride, yet on the whole he did not like these men, and would often say to his old book-keeper:

"If these gentlemen would pool their debts, we could build three factories the size of ours with the amount."

"A respectable set," whispered the obsequious book-keeper.

"Fools!" said Adler.

"That's what I mean," smiled the book-keeper submissively from under his shade.

Ferdinand spent whole nights playing cards and drinking. He had many love adventures, and acquired a bad reputation. Meanwhile the factory hands were ground down by more and more "economies." Fines were imposed for

coming late, for talking, for damages which were often purely imaginary. Those who were unable to do arithmetic had their wages simply reduced. They all cursed their employer and his son, for they saw the debauchery that was going on, and knew that they themselves were paying for it.

Chapter IV

Many years ago a certain nobleman had lived in the part of Poland to which we have introduced the reader, who was called a "crank" by his neighbours. He did not lead a dissipated life, and had married only when well advanced in years; but there was a stain upon his character—namely this: he indulged in teaching the peasants. He opened an elementary school where all the children were taught reading, writing and arithmetic, had religious instruction, and learnt a little tailoring and cobbling. Every boy had to learn to make simple suits, shirts and caps. All this formed the basis of the education. Afterwards he engaged a gardener, a blacksmith, a locksmith, a carpenter and a wheelwright, and the pupils now passed on to instruction in these trades, as well as to advanced arithmetic, geometry and drawing. The nobleman himself taught geography and history, read instructive books to the pupils, and told them countless anecdotes, all of which had the same moral—

namely, that being honest, patient, industrious and thrifty, among other good qualities, gave a man the true value of a human being.

The neighbouring landowners complained that he was spoiling the peasants, and experts laughed because he taught the boys all the trades. But he shrugged his shoulders, and said that if there were more Robinson Crusoes on earth, forced to know something of all trades while they were young, there would be fewer ignoramuses, loafers, scoundrels, or slaves tied to one place.

"Besides," said the quaint old man, "this is a whim of mine, if you like that better. You breed particular kinds of dogs, cattle and horses; why shouldn't I breed a particular class of human beings?"

He died suddenly, and his relations inherited his property, ran through it in a few years, and the school was forgotten. But it had produced a certain number of men of great economic, intellectual and moral value, though none of these ever occupied prominent positions.

The nobleman's spirit would have rejoiced at his pupils' progress, for he had not brought them up to be geniuses, but to be useful, average citizens such as are always needed in the community. One of these pupils was Kazimierz Gosławski. He, too, had learnt various trades, but he took a special liking to two of them—those of blacksmith and locksmith. He could

also draw a plan of an engine or a building, make mathematical calculations, prepare a wooden model of a foundry, and at a pinch make his own clothes and boots. The longer Gosławski lived, the more he appreciated his master's methods, and realized the practical importance of the anecdotes. He held his benefactor's memory sacred, and he and his wife and little daughter prayed for his soul every day. Gosławski had been working in the mechanical part of Adler's factory for seven years, and was the soul of the workshop. His earnings amounted to two and sometimes even to three roubles a day. There was a certain head-mechanic knocking about who drew a salary of fifteen hundred roubles a year, but he occupied himself more with factory scandals than with his own work.

In order to uphold his authority, this mechanic gave orders and explanations, but he did it in such a way that no one either understood them or attempted to carry them out; and this was a blessing for the factory, for had his mechanical ideas been realized in iron, steel and wood, the greater part of the engines would have had to go into the melting-pot.

It was only after Gosławski had found out the damage done to an engine, and put his hand to repairing it, that things went right again. More than once this simple locksmith had replaced parts of engines; unconsciously he had sometimes

made inventions without anyone knowing about it. If it had been known, the invention would have been put down to the genius of the head-mechanic, who always boasted of his achievements, and regretted that in this unintelligent Poland one had no chances of becoming director of several factories, no matter of what kind.

Adler had too keen an eye not to see Gosławski's value and the incompetence of his head-mechanic. But Gosławski was made of too dangerous a material to be given a place as independent manager, and the head-mechanic was a good scandal-monger; so he was kept in the foreground, and the other did the work. In this way everybody was satisfied, and the world at large never suspected that the well-known factory was really run by the brains of a "stupid Polish workman."

Gosławski was a man of medium height, with the coarse hands and bow-legs of a workman. When he was bending over his vice he was indistinguishable from the others; but when he looked up from under his mop of dark hair, his thin, pale face showed that he was an intellectually developed human being with a nervous disposition. Yet his calmness and the look in his thoughtful grey eyes proved that reason prevailed over his temperament.

He talked neither too much nor too little, and never too loudly. Sometimes he got animated, but never let himself be carried away by excite-

ment; and he knew how to listen, looking attentively and intelligently all the while into the speaker's eyes. Only to factory scandals he listened with half an ear and without interrupting his work. "What is the good of these things?" he used to say. But he would interrupt his most important work to listen to explanations coming within the range of his profession. He kept himself a little aloof from his fellow-workmen, though he was always friendly and ready to give advice, or even help, in small jobs. Yet he would never ask anybody's help for himself, for he had the same respect for a man's knowledge or time that he had for his money. The aim of his life was to establish a smith's workshop of his own. For this reason he hoarded up his earnings; he did not trust his money to the bank, and did not like to lend it to his fellow-workmen: rather would he give away a rouble or two now and then. For he was not mean: both he and his wife had plenty of clothes, plain but good, and on Sundays he would not begrudge himself a glass of beer or even a glass of wine. By means of this reasonable economy he had saved about eighteen hundred roubles, and was now looking about for the loan of a small building on some landowner's estate, in which he could set up his workshop. In exchange he would give preference to the landowner's orders. These arrangements are often made between a landowner and his smith, and

Gosławski had a place of this kind in view for Michaelmas.

His earnings in the mill were rather uncertain. When a new line was tried in the manufacture of cotton goods (and in this Gosławski was unequalled), he was very well paid by the piece; but when the experiment had turned out a success, and he had taught others how to do the work, his pay was reduced by half, or even three-quarters; sometimes he was only paid the tenth part. To keep the level of his wages higher, he would often work overtime, come early and stay late.

When the workmen complained that the boss was cheating them, Gosławski replied that they could not wonder, for they were cheating him in return. But sometimes he would lose patience, and mutter between his teeth:

"Vile German thief!"

Gosławski's wife wished to help her husband by working in the mill too, but he gave her a good scolding.

"You had better look after the child and the dinner! For every rouble you earn at the mill, two are lost at home."

He knew quite well, however, that she would earn more and the home would lose less; but he was ambitious, and did not want the wife of a future master to mix with common factory women. He was a good husband; sometimes he

grumbled that the dinner was unpunctual or badly cooked, that the child was dirty, or that his shirt had been made too blue. But he never made a scene or raised his voice. On Sundays he took his wife to church, a few versts off, and when it was fine he carried his little girl there too. Whenever he went into the town, he bought a toy for the child and some little piece of finery for his wife. He loved his little girl, though he was sorry not to have a son.

"What is the good of a girl?" he said. "You bring her up for another, and have to provide her with a dowry into the bargain to get her settled. With a son it is different: he is a support to you in your old age, and might take over the workshop."

"Just you get the workshop started, and then the son will come too," his wife replied.

"Oh, well, you have been saying that for three years; there is not much hope of you, as far as I can see," said the locksmith.

His wife was, however, not boasting without reason this time; for in the sixth year of their marriage, about the time when young Adler returned from abroad, she had given birth to a son. Gosławski was beside himself with joy. He spent about thirty roubles on the christening, and bought his wife a new dress, not counting the expenses of the confinement. His savings were thereby diminished by several hundred roubles, but he resolved to make them up before Michaelmas.

Then, to his misfortune, "economy" was introduced into the mill. This time Gosławski cursed with the others, but he went on working with redoubled zeal. He went to the mill at five o'clock in the morning, and did not come back till eleven o'clock at night, too tired to greet his wife or kiss the children. He fell on to the bed in his clothes, and slept like a log.

Such extreme effort annoyed his fellow-workmen; and his friend Żaliński, the engineer, a fat and quick-tempered man, said to him: "Kazik, why the devil are you toadying up to the boss and spoiling other people's chances? When they went to him yesterday to complain about the wages, he said to them: 'Do as Gosławski does; then you will have enough.'"

Gosławski excused himself.

"You see, my dear fellow, my wife has been ill, and I have had very heavy expenses. I would like to make up as much as I can, because, you know, I want to start on my own. What else am I to do since that dog has reduced the wages? I must go on slaving like this, though I have a pain in my side and my head swims."

"Bah!" said Żaliński; "I suppose you will take it out of the journeymen in your own workshop."

Gosławski shook his head.

"I don't want to profit by doing wrong. I don't give what is mine for nothing, but I won't take what belongs to others, either."

And he went off to his work, which, though he was used to it, had worn him out lately to such an extent that he was not able to collect his thoughts.

"If only I can start on my own," he thought, "I shall forget all this."

But the task was too great. To feed a family, to save all he could, to make up the expenses caused by his wife's confinement, and to pay for young Adler's travels into the bargain, went beyond the strength of any human being.

He looked sad and got still thinner and paler; sometimes the perspiration would break out all over him, and he would drop his hands on his vice and wonder why his brain, usually so quick, felt quite empty and dark. Possibly he would have slackened off if he had not seen in the darkness a fiery signboard:

GOSŁAWSKI'S MECHANICAL WORKSHOP. . . .

Get on! Only three months more!

Meanwhile fortune again smiled on Adler. The demand for his goods, which were excellent, was greater than ever, and in July double the amount of orders came in. He accepted them all after consulting his confidential clerks, and bought up cotton with all his available capital. The hands were told that they would have to work until nine o'clock in the evening, and they were to be paid double for overtime. More

workshops were added, and the question of how to make use of the Sundays arose. With regard to this Adler had his plan ready. Sunday work was to be paid at a double rate in the beginning, but in a measure, as the hands got used to it, the pay would be reduced.

If everything went all right, Adler calculated that the profits of the current year would make it possible for him to sell the factory, for which he would easily find a purchaser, and to take his millions and his son abroad.

Thus both the workman and the principal were simultaneously approaching the realization of their hopes.

The increased activity in the mill affected the engineering workshop in the first place. New hands were taken on, the compulsory hours were extended until nine, and overtime work until midnight. The first two hours of overtime were paid double, the next three times as much. A stricter control was introduced, and if anyone left off work before time, so much was deducted from his wages that his profits were practically reduced to nothing. The hands were weary in consequence, especially Gosławski, who, as the most expert, was obliged to work until midnight.

Even he himself felt that he could not go on at this rate, and asked for relief. The millionaire agreed, and proposed a new arrangement. Gosławski was in future to receive a fixed salary, and

work with his hands only at those parts of the machinery which required the greatest exactitude. His chief business would be to supervise the general run of the work and direct others. He would in reality be the head of the workshop, and while doing the work of a simple workman receive the pay of a head-mechanic.

No German would have agreed to such a proposal, but when it was first made it flattered Gosławski. He soon realized, however, that he was being exploited again, for he had to work physically as hard as before, and had in addition a greater strain on his mind. All day long he had to rush from the vice to the anvil, and from the anvil to the lathe, and was importuned besides by his fellow-workmen, who thought that Gosławski was there not only to give them information, but to do their work for them as well.

By the end of June he looked like an automaton. He never smiled, and hardly ever talked about anything that was not connected with his work. He, who had been so particular about tidiness, began to neglect his appearance. He ceased to go to church on Sundays, and slept till midday instead. In his relations with others he became irritable. His one pleasure was to sleep; he slept like a man in convalescence. He became a little more animated perhaps, when he kissed his little son " Good-morning " or " Good-night."

Gosławski himself quite understood the state

he was in. He knew that the hard work was wearing him out, but he saw no way of freeing himself from it. The contract with the landowner could not be signed before August, and he could not take possession of the workshop till October. If he left the mill he would have to live on his ready money, and spend in a few months some hundreds of roubles which were indispensable for the new start. The only thing to be done was to stick to his post and strain his strength to the utmost. Perhaps a week's rest after he had moved into his own household would restore the disturbed balance of his organism.

But he was sick of the mill. He carried a little calendar about with him on which he crossed out the days as they passed: only two months and a half now; sixty-five days; two months only! . . .

Chapter V

On a certain Saturday night in August the engineering workshop was in a ferment of rush and work.

It was a large building covered with glass like a hothouse; along one wall was the power-engine, along the other two forges. There was also a small hammer worked by a hand-wheel, several vices, a lathe, drilling machinery and a number of hand tools. Midnight was approaching, the lights had long been put out in all the other

parts of the mill; the tired weavers were asleep in their homes.

But here the great rush goes on. The hurried breath of the engine, the throb of the pumps, the din of the hammer, the rattle of the lathe, the grating of the files increase more and more. The air is soaked with steam, coal-dust and fine iron filings; the flames of the gas-lamps flicker through the heavy atmosphere like will-o'-the-wisps. Outside there is the stillness of night as a background to the mill; the moon peeps in through the glass which quivers incessantly from the noise.

There is hardly any talking in the room; the work is urgent, the hour late, so the men hurry on in silence. Here a group of grimy blacksmiths are dragging a huge white-hot iron bar to be hammered; there a row of them bend and raise themselves as under a command over their vices. Opposite them the turners bend to watch the revolving work in the machines. Sparks fly from under the hammer. From time to time an order or a curse is heard. Sometimes the hammering and filing slackens down, and then the mournful groan of the bellows blowing on to the furnaces begins.

Gosławski is at the lathe, turning a large steel cylinder; the work must be done exactly to the thousandth of an inch! But somehow Gosławski is off his work. There had been so much to do that day that he had not been able to leave the

workshop during the evening recess; he is even more than usually tired therefore. A light fever torments him, streams of perspiration flow down his body, at moments he has hallucinations, and then he imagines that he is somewhere else, far away. But he quickly rouses himself, rubs his eyes with his grimy hands to shake off the lassitude, and looks anxiously to see whether the cutting tool has not taken away too much of the cylinder.

" I am dead-beat," said his neighbour to him.

" So am I," replied Gosławski, sitting down on a stool.

" It's the heat," said the other. " The engine is red-hot, the blacksmiths are working with both forges; besides, it is getting late. Take a pinch of snuff."

" No, thank you," replied Gosławski, " I should like a pipe, but not snuff. I would rather have a drink of water."

He stepped away and dipped a rusty mug into a barrel of water. But the water was warm, and instead of being refreshed, Gosławski felt the perspiration breaking out still more. He was losing his strength.

" What's the time ?" he asked his neighbour.

" A quarter to twelve. Will you finish work to-day ?"

" Yes, I think so. I must still take a hair's-breadth off the cylinder; but, damn it ! I see everything double."

"It's the heat—the heat!" repeated the neighbour, taking another pinch of snuff and moving away.

Gosławski measured the diameter of the cylinder, moved the cutting tool, clamped it with the screws, and once more set the machine in motion. After the momentary strain of attention there followed a reaction in him, and he began to doze standing, his eyes fixed on the shining surface of the cylinder, on which drops of water were falling.

"Did you speak?" he suddenly asked his neighbour.

But the man, bending over his work, did not hear the question.

At that moment Gosławski fancied that he was at home: his wife and children are asleep; the lamp, turned low, is burning on the chest of drawers; his bed is ready for him. . . . Yes, here is the table, there is the chair! Worn out with fatigue, he wants to sit down on the chair; he leans his heavy arm on the edge of the table. . . .

The lathe made a strange noise. Something cracked in it and began to go to pieces, and a dreadful human shriek resounded through the workroom. . . .

Gosławski's right hand had been caught between the cogwheels; in the twinkling of an eye he was hung up as though welded to the machinery, which had got hold first of the fingers, then of the hand, then of the bone up to the elbow: the

blood gushed out. The wretched man saw what had happened and tore himself away; the crushed and broken bones and torn muscles were not able to bear the load, they broke, and Gosławski fell heavily to the floor.

All this happened within a few seconds.

"Stop the engine!" shouted Gosławski's neighbour.

The engine was stopped, and all the men left their work and came running up to the wounded man. Someone poured a can of water over him; one young man had a fit when he saw the blood; others ran out of the workshop without knowing why.

"Fetch the doctor!" Gosławski cried in a changed voice.

"A horse . . . hurry up! . . . run to the town!" shouted the workmen, as if they were out of their senses.

"Oh, the blood, the blood!" groaned the wounded man.

The bystanders did not know what he meant.

"For God's sake, stop the blood! Tie up my arm!"

Nobody moved; they did not know how to stop the blood, and were paralyzed with fright.

"What a place this is!" cried the man who had been working next to Gosławski—"no doctor, no bone-setter! . . . Where is Schmidt? Run for Schmidt!"

Some ran for Schmidt. Meanwhile one of the old blacksmiths showed more presence of mind than the others, knelt down, and compressed the arm above the elbow with his hands. The blood began to flow more slowly. It was a terrible injury; part of the arm and two fingers were left, the rest had been torn away. At last, after a quarter of an hour, Schmidt, who took the doctor's place in the factory, appeared. He was just as terrified as the rest, and bandaged the wounded arm with rags, which instantly became soaked with blood. He ordered the men to carry Gosławski home. They laid him on some boards; two men carried him, two supported his head, the rest crowded round, and they all moved away in a body.

There was no one in the offices, and no light showed in Adler's house. The dogs, scenting blood, began to howl; the night watchman took off his cap and looked with pale face after the procession moving along the highroad, which was flooded by the moonlight.

A factory hand appeared at an open window in his shirt-sleeves, and called out:

"Hallo! What's the matter?"

"Gosławski has had his hand torn off!"

The wounded man uttered low groans. Suddenly the clatter of hoofs was heard, and a carriage with a pair of greys and a coachman in livery appeared on the highroad. Ferdinand, who was

returning from a drinking bout, was lolling inside.

"Out of the way!" shouted the coachman.

"Out of the way yourself! We are carrying a wounded man!"

The procession drew near to the carriage. Ferdinand Adler roused himself, looked out of the carriage, and asked:

"What's the matter there?"

"Gosławski has had his hand torn off."

"Gosławski? Is that the fellow who has the pretty wife?" said Ferdinand.

There was a momentary silence. Then somebody murmured:

"How sharp he is!"

Ferdinand regained his senses, and asked, changing his voice:

"Has the doctor dressed his wounds?"

"There is no doctor in the factory."

"Ah, true. . . . Has the bone-setter seen to it?"

"There is no bone-setter either, now."

"Very well then: horses must be sent to fetch the doctor from the town."

"Perhaps, sir, you would order your coachman to turn round?" one of the men suggested.

"My horses are tired," said Ferdinand; "I will send others." And the carriage moved on.

"What a fellow!" said the workmen; "we can wear ourselves out, and he does not think of giving us rest; but his horses must be rested!"

"Oh, well . . . you have got to pay for horses, and workpeople can be had for nothing," another replied.

The crowd was approaching Gosławski's cottage. A lamp was burning in the window. One of the workmen gently knocked at the door.

"Who is there?"

"Open the door, Pani Gosławska!"

In a moment a woman appeared half dressed in the doorway.

"What is it?" she asked, looking terrified at the crowd.

"Your husband has had a slight accident, so we brought him home."

"Jesus!" she cried, and ran up to the stretcher. "Oh, Kazio, what has happened to you?"

"Don't wake the children," whispered her husband.

"What a lot of blood—Mother of Mercy!"

"Be quiet!" murmured the wounded man. "My hand has been torn off, but that is nothing; send for the doctor."

The woman trembled and began to sob. Two workmen took her by the arms and led her into the room; others carried the wounded man inside. His face was distorted with pain, and he bit his lips to suppress the groans that might have waked the children.

In the morning Adler was informed of the accident. He listened in silence, and asked:

"Has the doctor been?"

"We sent for the doctor and for the bone-setter, but they were both out, attending to other patients."

"Fetch another doctor. Telegraph to Warsaw for a locksmith in Gosławski's place."

About ten o'clock Adler went to the workshop to have a look at the damaged lathe. Near the machine he stepped by accident into a pool of blood and shuddered, but soon recovered himself. He carefully examined the cogwheel, to which bits of flesh and of the torn shirt still adhered. There were a few notches in the wheel.

"Have we got another wheel like that?" he asked the head-mechanic.

"Yes," whispered the pale German, who was sick at the sight of the blood.

"Has the doctor come?"

"Not yet."

Adler whistled through his teeth with impatience. The absence of the doctor made a very unpleasant impression on him. At last, about noon, he was informed that the doctor had arrived. The old man quickly left the house. In passing the room where Ferdinand was still sleeping off the effects of his drinking bout, he beat a tattoo on the door with his stick, but got no answer. There was a large crowd outside Gosławski's cottage, for hardly anyone had gone to church. They all wanted to know the details

of Gosławski's accident. A neighbour had taken his wife and children to her house.

All conversation was stopped when the crowd caught sight of Adler. Only the most timid took off their caps, the others turned their heads away, and the boldest looked at him without raising their hands to their caps.

The mill-owner was struck. "What do they want of me?" he thought.

He spoke to one of the workmen, a German, and asked how the sick man was.

"They can't tell," the man answered sullenly. "They say his whole arm had to be taken off."

Adler sent someone to ask the doctor to come out to him.

"Well, how is he?" inquired the mill-owner.

"Dying," answered the doctor.

Adler was staggered, and exclaimed, raising his voice:

"What nonsense! People sometimes lose both hands or both legs and don't die of it."

"The dressing was bad; there had been enormous loss of blood. Besides, the man had been overworked."

This answer soon made the round of the crowd, and a murmur arose.

"I will pay you well if you will look carefully after him. It cannot be true that people die from such an injury as that."

At this moment the sick man cried out; the

doctor ran back into the house, and the mill-owner turned to go home.

"If there had been a doctor at the factory this would not have happened!" someone in the crowd called out.

"We shall all come to this if they go on keeping us at work till midnight," cried another.

Curses and threats were uttered here and there. But the old giant held his head erect, put his hands in his pockets, and passed through the thickest crowd. Only he half closed his eyes and was pale down to his neck. He did not seem to hear what those on the edge of the crowd were saying, and those near him gave way, guessing instinctively that this man was afraid neither of curses nor even of an open attack.

Towards evening Gosławski, whom the doctor had not left for a moment, called for his wife. She came in on tiptoe, staggering and keeping back the tears that dimmed her eyes. The wounded man looked strangely haggard, and his eyes were fixed. In the dusk his face seemed to have the colour of earth.

"Where are you, Magdzia?" he asked indistinctly, and then said, with long pauses: "Nothing will come of our workshop now . . . I have no arm . . . I am going to follow after it . . . why should I eat my bread for nothing?"

His wife began to sob.

"Are you there, Magdzia? . . . Remember

the children. The money for my funeral is in the drawer—you know. . . . What a lot of flies there are . . . such a buzzing. . . ."

He began to toss about restlessly, and breathed heavily, like a man going off into a deep sleep. The doctor made a sign, and somebody took the wife away almost by force and led her into the friendly neighbour's cottage. In a few minutes the doctor followed her there; the poor woman looked into his eyes and knelt down on the floor weeping bitterly.

"Oh, sir, why have you left him? Is he so ill? Perhaps——"

"The Lord will comfort you," said the doctor.

The women crowded round to try and quiet her.

"Don't cry, Pani Gosławska. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Get up and don't cry—the children will hear you!"

The widow was almost choked with sobs.

"Let me be on the floor; I feel better here," she whispered. "May the Lord give you all the good, since He has given me all the bad. I have lost my Kazio! Oh, my beloved! why did you work so hard and suffer so much? Only yesterday he said that we should be on our own in October, and now he has gone to his grave instead of to his workshop!"

When the workmen entered into the dead man's home and began to move the furniture about, and she realized that no noise would wake

her husband again, she gave a terrible shriek and fainted.

Gosławski's death subsequently became the cause of much disturbance at the factory and of much trouble to Adler. A deputation waited upon him on the Tuesday to ask permission for all the hands to go to the funeral. Adler was furious, and would only allow a few delegates from each room to go, announcing at the same time that every workman who should leave the factory of his own accord would be fined. In spite of this most of the hands left the mill, and Adler posted up a notice that every workman who had absented himself would have his daily pay halved and would be fined a rouble in addition. Whereupon the more spirited among the hands urged their mates to strike, and one of the stokers suggested the blowing up of the boiler. Adler would have taken no notice of such talk at another time, but now he was beside himself. He called their grumbling mutiny, demanded police from the town, drove the leaders out of the mill and brought an action against the stoker.

When the workpeople saw these drastic measures, they were cowed into submission. They ceased to threaten a strike, but asked for the reinstatement of all the hands, and that at least a bone-setter should be engaged with the money extorted by the fines.

To this Adler replied that he would do what he liked, when he liked, and refused to listen at all to the demand for reinstatement of those he had dismissed.

By the following Monday things had calmed down at the factory. Pastor Boehme came to see Adler, with the intention of inducing him to give way to some of the reasonable demands of the workpeople. But he encountered an unexpected resistance; the mill-owner declared that, if he had ever had intentions of giving way to his workpeople's demands, he no longer had any, that he would rather close the factory than give in.

"Do you know, Martin," he said, "that they have got us talked about in the newspapers? The comic papers have ridiculed Ferdinand, and it has been said that Gosławski died from overwork and because there was no doctor."

"There is some truth in that," answered Boehme.

"There is no truth whatsoever in it," shouted the mill-owner. "I have worked much harder than Gosławski, every German workman works harder; and as for the doctor, he might just as well have been absent from the factory to visit a patient, as he was from town at that particular moment."

"The bone-setter might have been there at any rate," observed the pastor.

Adler gave no answer. He walked up and down the room with long strides, breathing hard.

"Let us go into the garden," he proposed. "Johann, take a bottle of hock into the summer-house."

The pleasant coolness in the summer-house near the pond, the freshness of the wind rustling in the trees, and perhaps the glass of good wine, gradually soothed Adler. Pastor Boehme looked at him over the rim of his gold spectacles, and seeing him in a better mood, resolved to return to the attack.

"Well," he said, clinking his glass against Adler's, "a man who keeps such excellent wine as this cannot have a bad heart. Let them off their fines, Gottlieb, take them all on again, and install a doctor. . . . Your health!"

"I will drink your health, Martin, but I promise nothing of the sort," repeated the mill-owner, although his anger had somewhat cooled.

The pastor shook his head, and muttered:

"H'm! it's a pity you are so obstinate!"

"I cannot sacrifice my interest to sentiments. If I give them a thousand roubles to-day, they will want a million to-morrow."

"You exaggerate," said Boehme, annoyed; "my advice is that, if you can settle this business for ten thousand roubles, give fifteen thousand rather, and make an end of it."

"It is at an end already," said Adler. "The

worst of them are gone, and the rest know that there is discipline here. If I were as soft-hearted as you, they would trample me under foot."

The pastor said nothing, but began to throw things on to the surface of the pond—first a cork, then bits of wood broken off from a stick.

"My dear Martin, what are you throwing rubbish on the water for?" asked Adler.

The pastor pointed towards the pond, where the things he had thrown upon the water were making circles that grew larger and larger.

"Do you see how the waves are getting farther and farther away from the middle?" he asked.

"They are always doing that. What is there peculiar in it?"

"You are quite right," said the pastor; "it is always like that—everywhere, on the pond and in our lives. When something good happens in the world, waves are produced by it; they grow larger and larger and extend farther and farther."

"I don't understand you," said Adler indifferently, sipping his wine.

"I will explain it to you, if you will not be angry with me."

"I am never angry with you."

"Very well. You see, it is like this: you have brought your son up badly and have turned him loose upon the world, as I threw that stick into the water. He has incurred debts—that was the

first wave. Then you reduced the workmen's pay—that was the second. Gosławski's death was the third; the troubles in the factory and the newspaper scandals were the fourth; and so on with the dismissal of the hands and the lawsuit. What will the tenth wave be?"

"That does not concern me," said Adler. "Let your waves go out into the world and frighten fools; I am not interested in them."

The pastor pointed to a cork he had just thrown on to the surface.

"Look, Gottlieb, sometimes it is the tenth wave which rebounds on the shore and returns to where it came from."

The old mill-owner reflected for a while on this demonstration, which was quite clear, and for a brief moment it seemed as if he were hesitating, as if an indefinable fear had sprung up in him. But it was only for a moment. Adler had too little imagination and reasoned too obstinately to foresee remote possibilities. He convinced himself that the pastor was talking drivel and preaching one of his sermons, so he laughed and replied in his thick voice:

"No, no, Martin; I have taken proper precautions to prevent your waves from returning to me."

"How can you tell?"

"The doctor will not come back, nor the leaders of the strike, nor the fines, nor even Gosławski!"

"But misfortune may return."

"No, no, no, it will not return! . . . or if it does it will break against my fists, against the factory, the insurance, the police . . . and above all against my money. . . ."

It was late when the friends parted.

"What a fool Martin is!" thought Adler; "he means to frighten me."

The pastor, driving home in his little cart and looking upwards to the starlit sky, asked anxiously: "Which of the waves will return?" The comparison had come into his head unexpectedly, and he looked upon it as a sort of revelation. He believed firmly that the wave of wrong would turn; but when? . . . which of them would it be? . . .

Chapter VI

Generally, good or bad actions only assume their proper significance in people's opinion when they are reported in print. It had been known for a long time that old Adler was an egoist and a sweater, and his son an egoist and a debauchee. But public opinion had not been raised against them before the articles on Gosławski's death had been published. After that the whole neighbourhood became interested in what was going on at the mill. Everybody knew the extent of Ferdinand's debts, the sums which old Adler sweated out of his workmen by reducing their pay, etc.

Gosławski was considered to have been a victim of the father's greed and the son's debauchery.

Public opinion made itself felt in people's relations to Ferdinand. A few young men had cut him dead at the request of their parents; others preserved only the outward forms of politeness. Even from the friends that stuck to him, and these were not of the best sort, he often heard remarks which sounded like a provocation.

Nor was this all. In hotels and restaurants, wineshops and cafés, though they had made much money out of Ferdinand, newspapers containing correspondence about Gosławski's death were purposely put on his table; and when, surrounded by his friends, he once called for wine and wished to know if a good kind of red wine were to be had, he got the answer:

"Yes, sir, red as blood."

Another man might have been impressed by these manifestations of general ill-will, and might have gone away for a time, or even changed his mode of living and exercised some influence over his father. Not so Ferdinand. He had no desire to work and no intention of giving up his amusements. Public opinion not only did not distress him—he liked to provoke it. He judged people's standard by that of the companions of his revels, and felt sure that sooner or later everybody would crawl to him. The silent struggle between him and the public excited him pleasurably, and

he saw possibilities of future triumphs in it; for he was determined to quarrel with the first person who should get in his way. He felt in desperate need of a quarrel to revive his jaded nerves and to establish his reputation as a dangerous adversary. In his own way he delighted in breaking down obstacles, for he was his father's true son.

He had a great dislike to a certain Pan Zapora, a landowner and a judge. This man was of severe and unprepossessing appearance, of medium height, thick-set, and with overhanging brows. He talked little, but in a decided way, made no ceremonies with anybody, and called a spade a spade. But behind his rough exterior he possessed great intelligence and a wide knowledge, a noble heart and a loyal character. It was impossible to ingratiate oneself with him either by politeness, position, or the propounding of theories. With him only actions counted. He would listen indifferently to talk, looking sullenly at the speaker and taking his measure all the while. But if he found a man to be honest he would become his friend for good or ill. For people with bad character or no character at all he had a profound contempt.

Young Adler had met this formidable judge several times, but had never talked to him, as there had been no opportunity. Zapora neither sought nor avoided him; his friends knew, however, that when he spoke of "that fool," he

meant Ferdinand, and the more experienced felt sure that the two men would meet sooner or later in the narrow sphere of provincial life, and that Adler would then hear a few bitter home-truths. Ferdinand instinctively felt Zapora's dislike for him; more than that, he suspected him of being the author of the newspaper articles. He was in no hurry to make his acquaintance, but he had made up his mind to pay him out at the first opportunity that offered.

In the beginning of September the usual fair took place in the little town, and the noblemen from the surrounding districts were in the habit of meeting on this occasion. Zapora, who had an office in the town, settled some pressing affairs, purchased what he needed, and went to have dinner at the hotel at two o'clock in the afternoon.

He found a crowd of acquaintances in the dining-room; the tables were set in one long row and lavishly provided with bottles of wine, mostly champagne, and the preparations seemed to promise a drinking bout.

"What is this?" asked Zapora. "Is someone giving a dinner?"

Among the acquaintances who greeted him was a friend of young Adler's.

"Just fancy," he said. "Adler is paying for all the dinners to-day, and anyone who comes is invited. I hope you will not refuse us the pleasure of your company?"

Zapora looked at him from the corner of his eye.

"I do refuse," he replied.

The young man, who was not remarkable for excessive tact, asked:

"Why?"

"Because only old Adler would have the right to ask me to a dinner paid for with his money, and even if he did ask me I should refuse."

Another of Ferdinand's friends joined in the conversation.

"What do you have to throw in the Adlers' teeth?"

"Not much; only that the father is a sweater and the son a loafer, and that between the two they do more harm than good."

Public opinion seemed to be summed up in these words from a man of personal courage. Adler's friends were silent, the other guests embarrassed, and the more sensitive took their hats to leave the room. At that moment the door was flung wide open and Ferdinand hurried in, accompanied by one of his friends. He noticed the judge at once, and not knowing what had happened, asked his companion to introduce him.

"Right you are!" said the friend, advancing towards the judge.

"What a lucky chance!" he exclaimed. "Adler is just going to give a dinner here, and as you have fallen into the trap, we will not let you go. But you don't know one another?"

There was a general silence in the room during the introduction.

"Pan Adler—Pan Zapora."

Ferdinand held out his hand.

"I have long wished to make your acquaintance."

"Delighted," said Zapora, without moving.

Some of the guests smiled maliciously. Ferdinand grew pale; for a moment he was confused. But he pulled himself together at once and changed his tactics.

"I have wished to make your acquaintance," he continued, "in order to thank you for the correspondence about my father in the newspapers."

Zapora fixed him with a severe look.

"About your father?" he asked. "I have written only one letter about your father, and that was to the village mayor about the summons."

Adler was boiling with rage.

"It was myself, then, you wrote about in the comic papers?"

Zapora did not lose his calmness for an instant. He only gripped his stick tighter, and said:

"You are quite mistaken. I leave correspondence in the comic papers to young men of no occupation who wish to become notorious by any means at their disposal."

Adler lost his self-control.

"You are insulting me!" he shouted.

"On the contrary, I will not even retract my last statement in order not to offend you."

The excited young man was on the point of throwing himself upon Zapora.

"You shall give me satisfaction!" he panted.

"With pleasure."

"At once!"

"Well, I must have my dinner first; I am hungry," said Zapora coolly. "It does not take me more than an hour; after that I shall be at your disposal in my house."

And nodding to his acquaintances, he slowly left the room.

Ferdinand's banquet was not a success. Many of the guests left before dinner; others shammed gaiety. But Ferdinand himself was in excellent spirits. His first glass of wine soothed him; the second gave his excitement a pleasant flavour. He was delighted at the prospect of a duel, especially of a duel with Zapora, and he had not the slightest doubt of his success.

"I shall give him a lesson in shooting," he whispered to one of his seconds, "and that will be the end of it."

And he thought: "That will do more to put my position right than any amount of dinners."

The more experienced adventurers, of whom there was no lack in the room, had to admit, when they looked at him, that he had grit and pluck of a certain kind.

"Thank Heaven!" said one of them, "our newspapers will at last have something sensational to talk about."

"I am only sorry . . ." said another.

"For what?"

"Those bottles that we may see no more."

"Oh, I hope we shall give them decent burial."

"I hope we shan't have to do the same with one of the principals."

"I doubt it. What are the conditions?"

"Pistols, and to fight till blood flows."

"Damn it! Whose idea was that?"

"Adler's."

"Is he so sure of himself?"

"He is an excellent shot."

Towards the end of the dinner it became known that Zapora had accepted the conditions, and that the duel was to take place the next morning.

"Gentlemen," said Adler, "I invite you all. We will drink all night."

"Is that wise?"

"I always do it before a contre-dance. This is my fourth," said Ferdinand.

In another and more respectable restaurant, Zapora's friends were also discussing what had happened.

"It is a shame," said one of them, "that a respectable man like Zapora should have to fight with such a senseless fool."

"Zapora had no business to fall into the trap."

"He fell into it by accident, but after that there was no way out of it."

"It is a strange thing," said an old nobleman, "that such a good-for-nothing young fellow as Adler should not only be admitted into society, but also be at liberty to force a quarrel of this kind upon a man like Zapora. Formerly that sort of thing would have been impossible. It is because public opinion is getting slack that respectable men have to stake their lives. Nevertheless I am sorry for Zapora."

"Isn't he a good shot?"

"Quite fair, but the other is more—he is a real virtuoso."

At about six o'clock Ferdinand retired to his room in the hotel. He wanted a little rest between his dinner-party and his night orgy; but he could not sleep, and began pacing up and down. Then he noticed that the windows opposite were those of Zapora's office.

The street was narrow; the office was on the ground floor, and his own room on the first floor; Ferdinand could therefore closely observe what was going on. The judge was talking to his clerk and to a barrister, and showing them some papers. After some time the barrister took his leave and the clerk went out of the room. The judge was left alone.

He placed the lamp on the writing-table, lighted a cigar, and began to write on a large sheet of

paper: first a long heading, then he continued quickly and evenly. Adler felt sure that the judge was writing his will.

Ferdinand had already fought several duels, considering them a kind of dangerous amusement. But now he became conscious that a duel could also be a very serious affair, for which one ought to be properly prepared. But how?

There was this man writing a will!

He lay down on his sofa. While he was distinctly conscious of all the noises going on in the corridor, the remembrance of an incident in his early boyhood, when the mill had not long been started, came back vividly to him. He had noticed a small door fastened with a nail in the engine-room. This door used to interest and alarm him. One day he took courage, pressed the bent nail aside, and opened the door. He looked into a small recess; there were a few copper pipes, a coil of rope and a broom.

The memory of this little adventure came back to him whenever he was going to fight a duel, usually at the moment when the seconds had measured the distance and he saw the barrel of his adversary's pistol pointed at him and felt the trigger under his own finger. The mysterious door of Destiny, which is sometimes opened by a bullet, had so far not revealed anything remarkable to him—merely a wounded adversary or else a score of champagne bottles emptied with

jolly companions. But what had these duels amounted to? One shot on either side, for the sake of a prima-donna, or a bet at the races, or a jostle in the streets.

To-morrow's affair was of a different kind. Here was he, the son of an unpopular father, coming forward to fight a man respected by everybody, and as it were the representative of an offended community. On the side of his adversary were all those who had the courage to stand up against Adler, all the workpeople and most of the officials at the factory. And who was on his side?

Not his father, for he would not have allowed him to fight; not the companions of his dissipations, for they felt uncomfortable, and were only waiting for an opportunity to desert him. Should he wound Zapora, he would give his enemies fresh cause for indignation; should he be wounded himself, people would say it was a just punishment on him and his father.

What was the meaning of it all? He only wanted to enjoy life along with everybody else. He had been used to being treated with exquisite manners by his companions; people had been indulgent, timid with him. This man, who flung impertinences in his face—where did he spring from so suddenly? Why had there been no one to warn him? Why should the follies of his youth come to such a tragic end?

The mysterious door assumed a sinister aspect. He had a presentiment that this time it would not conceal pipes, ropes and a broom, but a notice on a coffin, which he had once seen in an undertaker's shop in Warsaw: "Lodgings for a single person."

"The undertaker must have been a wag," Ferdinand thought.

The hotel sofa was not remarkable for its softness; when Ferdinand leant his head against its arm, he was reminded of his midnight drives home in his carriage. For a man in a sitting posture that was extremely comfortable, but when you lay down it was as uncomfortable as this sofa. He had the sensation of driving home in it—of the gentle jostling, the clatter of the horses' hoofs: it is midnight; the moon, standing high in the sky, lights up the road. The carriage quivers and then stops.

"What is the matter?" asks Ferdinand in his dream.

"Gosławski's arm has been torn off," answers a low voice.

"Is that the man with the pretty wife?"

"How sharp he is!" says the same low voice.

"Sharp? Who is sharp?" says Ferdinand to himself, turning round on the sofa, away from the scene. But the phantoms do not vanish; he again sees the crowd of men round the stretcher, and the wounded man, his arm in blood-soaked

wrappings laid on his chest. He can even see the foreshortening of the shadows on the road.

"How the man suffers!" whispers Ferdinand. "And he must die—must die!" He has the sensation of being the man on the stretcher, tortured with pain, his arm shattered, and of seeing his own face in the cold, cruel moonlight.

Whatever had happened? Champagne had never had this effect on him before. Something entirely new was overpowering, oppressing him—tearing his heart—boring into his brain; he felt as if he must shout, run away, hide somewhere.

Ferdinand jumped up. Dusk was filling the room.

"What the devil! I seem to be afraid . . . afraid! . . . I? . . ."

With difficulty he found the matches, scattered them on the floor, picked one up, struck it—it went out—struck another, and lighted the candle.

He looked at himself in the glass; his face was ashen, and there were dark circles round his eyes; his pupils were much enlarged.

"Am I afraid?" he repeated.

The candle was trembling in his hand.

"If the pistol is going to jump like that to-morrow, I shall be in a nice mess!" he thought.

He looked out of the window. There was Zapora, still sitting at his desk on the ground floor across the street, writing quietly and evenly. The sight made Ferdinand shake off his

nervousness. His vivacious temperament got the better of the phantoms.

"Go on writing, my dear, and I will put the full-stop to it!"

Steps approached in the corridor, and there was a knock at the door.

"Get up, Ferdinand, we are ready for the bout!" called a familiar voice.

Ferdinand was himself again. If he had had to jump into a precipice bristling with bayonets, he would not have flinched. When he opened the door to his friend he greeted him with a hearty laugh. He laughed at his momentary nervousness, at the phantoms, at the question: "Am I afraid?"

No, he was not afraid. He felt again the strength of a lion and the reckless courage of youth, which fears no danger and has no limits.

The carouse went on till break of day. The windows of the hotel shook with the laughter and noise, and the cellars ran empty, so that wine had to be fetched from elsewhere. . . .

At six o'clock four carriages left the town.

Chapter VII

For several days heavy bales of cotton had been pouring into the factory. Adler, expecting a rise in the prices of raw material, had invested all his available money in the buying up of large quantities. Only part of it had so far been delivered.

His calculations had not deceived him; a few days after the contract was signed the prices rose, and they were still rising. Adler declined the most advantageous offers for re-sale. He rubbed his hands with pleasure. This was the best stroke of business he had done for a long time, and he foresaw that, long before all his raw material had been made up, his capital would have been trebled.

"I shall have finished with the mill soon," he said to himself.

It was a strange thing—from the moment that he saw the goal of his wishes definitely before him, a hitherto unknown lassitude took possession of him. He was tired of the mill, and vaguely longed for other things. Sometimes he begged his son not to go out so much, to stay at home and talk to him of his travels. More and more often he would slip over to Pastor Boehme for a talk.

"I am tired out," he said to him. "Gosławski's death and the riots in the factory stick in my throat like bones. Do you know that sometimes I even find myself envying your way of living. But that's all nonsense; it shows I am getting old."

And as Gosławski, on whose grave the earth was still fresh, had counted the days, so the old mill-owner now counted the months of his stay at the mill.

"By next July I ought to have made up all the cotton. In June I must announce the sale

of the mill; in August at the latest they must pay up, for I don't give credit. In September I shall be free. I won't say anything to Ferdinand until the last moment. How pleased he will be! Then I shall invest the money and live on the interest; for the rascal would run through it in a few years' time, and then I should have to go and be foreman somewhere."

His love for Ferdinand grew stronger and stronger, and he excused his obvious neglect of his father.

"Why should I force the boy to work at the mill, when I am sick of it myself? And why should he care if I am longing for his company? He must have young people to amuse himself with; and my amusement is—work!"

On the day following the fair the old mill-owner was, as usual, making the round of all the workshops and offices. Many of his employés had been in the town, and there was much gossip about the joke Ferdinand had played upon the neighbourhood. It was said that he had bought up all the dinners at the hotel, and that every nobleman had to bow to him before he could obtain anything to eat or to drink. At first Adler laughed, but when he had reckoned up what this joke was likely to cost him his face became sullen.

The vanloads of raw cotton were standing in the courtyard, and were being unloaded by extra

hands. Adler looked on for a while, and then proceeded on his round of inspection, giving strict orders that no one was to smoke anywhere. When he turned into his office, he saw two women talking excitedly to the porter; seeing Adler, they ran away. But he paid no attention to them.

A clerk, looking strangely unnerved, came running out of the office; the book-keeper, the cashier and his assistant, were talking together in one corner of the room with obvious signs of excitement. At the sight of their chief they quickly returned to their desks, bending low over their books. Even this roused no suspicion in Adler. They had probably been at the fair and were discussing scandal of some sort.

In his private office Adler found himself face to face with a stranger. The man was impatient and restless. He was pacing quickly up and down the room. When the mill-owner entered, he stood still and asked, in an embarrassed tone:

"Pan Adler?"

"Yes; do you wish to see me?"

For a while the man was silent. His mouth twitched. The mill-owner looked at him searchingly, trying to guess who he was and what he wanted. He did not look like a candidate for a post at the mill, but rather like a rich young gentleman.

"I have an important affair to discuss with you," he said at last.

"Perhaps you would rather speak to me at my own house?" said Adler, realizing that with such an excited person it might be better to talk out of earshot of the clerks. He might have some claim on him.

The stranger hesitated for a moment, and then spoke quickly:

"All right; let us go to the house. I have been there already."

"Were you looking for me?"

"Yes; because—you see, Pan Adler, we have taken Ferdinand there."

The thought of a calamity of any kind was so far from Adler that he asked quite cheerfully:

"Was Ferdinand so drunk that you had to bring him home?"

"He is wounded," replied the stranger.

They were now in front of the house. Adler stopped.

"Who is wounded?" he asked.

"Ferdinand."

The old man did not comprehend.

"Has he broken his leg or his neck, or what do you mean?"

"It is a bullet wound."

"A bullet? How?"

"He has had a duel."

The mill-owner's red face now flushed the colour of brick. He threw down his hat in the portico and hurried through the open door. He

did not ask who had wounded his son. What did that matter ?

He found the servants and another stranger in the room. Pushing them aside, he stepped up to where Ferdinand was lying on the couch. The wounded man was without coat or waistcoat, and his face was so dreadfully changed that at first the father scarcely recognized his own son. The doctor was sitting at the head of the couch. Adler stared, and then fell upon a chair, leant forward with his hands on his knees, and asked in a stifled voice:

" What have you been doing, you scamp ?"

Ferdinand gave him a look of indescribable sadness; then he took his father's hand and kissed it. He had not done this for a long time.

Adler shuddered and was silent. Ferdinand began to speak in a low voice and with pauses:

" I had to . . . father . . . I had to. Everyone spoke against us, the nobility, the newspapers, even the waiters. They were saying that I was squandering the money while you sweated the workpeople. Before long they would have spat in our faces."

" Do not exert yourself," whispered the doctor.

The old man listened with the greatest astonishment and sorrow. His thick lips were parted.

" Save me . . . father . . . !" cried Ferdinand with raised voice. " I have promised ten thousand roubles to the doctor."

A cloud of displeasure flashed across Adler's face. "Why so much?" he asked mechanically.

"Because I am dying . . . I feel I am dying."

The old man started up from his chair.

"You are mad!" he exclaimed. "You have done a foolish thing, but you are not going to die!"

"I am dying," the wounded man groaned.

Adler, in utter bewilderment, pulled his fingers till the joints cracked.

"He is mad! Good Lord! he is out of his mind! Tell him he is silly, doctor—he speaks of dying. . . . As if we should allow him to die! You have been promised ten thousand roubles: that is not enough," feverishly continued the old man. "I will give a hundred thousand for my son, if there is the slightest danger. But mind you, I am not going to pay if he is merely silly. What is his condition?"

"It is not exactly dangerous," replied the doctor; "yet we must be careful."

"Of course! Do you hear him, Ferdinand? Now, don't bother yourself and me. . . . Johann! Send a wire to Warsaw for all the best doctors. Send to Vienna and Berlin—to Paris, if necessary. Let the doctor give you the addresses of the most famous men. I will pay . . . I have enough money. . . ."

"Oh, I feel so terribly ill," Ferdinand groaned, tossing about on the couch. His father hurried to his side.

"Compose yourself," said the doctor.

"Father!" cried the dying man; "my father, I cannot see you any more!"

Blood appeared on his lips. His eyes were dilated with despair.

"Air!" he cried.

He jumped up, and with hands outstretched like a blind man he turned towards the window. Suddenly his arms dropped; he staggered and fell upon the couch, striking his head against the wall. Once more he turned towards his father, and opened his eyes with difficulty. Large tears stood in them. Adler, utterly overcome and trembling all over, sat down near him, and wiped the tears from his eyes and the froth from his lips with his large hands.

"Ferdinand . . . Ferdinand," he whispered, "be quiet. . . . You shall live. . . . You shall have all I possess."

Suddenly he felt his son getting heavy on his arms and dropping.

"Doctor! Bring him round! He is fainting!"

"Pan Adler, you had better go out of the room," said the doctor.

"Why should I go out of the room when my son is in need of my help?"

"He is no longer in need of it!"

Adler looked at his son, gripped him tightly, shook him. A large patch of blood had appeared on the bandage which covered his chest.

Ferdinand was dead.

Frenzy seized the old man. He jumped up from the couch, kicked over the chair, knocked against the doctor, and ran out into the courtyard and from there into the road. On the road he met one of the van-drivers bringing in the cotton. He seized him by the shoulders.

"Do you know my son is dead?" he shouted.

He flung the man on the ground and ran on to the porter's lodge.

"Hallo, there! Call up all the men! Let them all come in front of my house!"

He ran back to his dead son's room as fast as he had run out of it, sat down, and looked and looked at him in silence for half an hour. Then he suddenly started up.

"What does this silence mean?" he asked. "Has the machinery broken down?"

"You ordered all the hands to be called up, sir," answered Johann, "so they stopped the machinery, and are now waiting in the yard."

"What for? There is no reason for them to wait! Let them go back to work, and weave and spin and make a noise. . . ."

He clasped his head with both hands.

"My son! . . . My son! . . . My son! . . ."

Someone had sent for the pastor, and he now came hurrying into the room, weeping.

"Gottlieb!" he cried, "God has greatly afflicted you; but let us trust His mercy."

Adler gave him a lingering glance, then pointed to his son's dead body and said:

"Look, Martin! that is myself; it is not his corpse, it is my own. There lies my factory, my fortune, my hope. But no! . . . he is alive! . . . Tell me that, and I shall be calm. How my heart aches! . . ."

The pastor led him away into the garden, the doctor and the seconds left, the servants dispersed.

"Do you know what is the worst of it?" continued Adler. "In a year's time, or perhaps sooner, the doctors will discover a way of curing such wounds; but what will be the good of that to me? I would have given everything now for such a discovery."

The pastor took his hand.

"Gottlieb, how long is it since you have prayed?"

"I don't know . . . thirty—forty years."

"Do you remember your prayers?"

"I remember that I had a son."

"Your son is with the Lord."

Adler's head dropped.

"How greedy he is, this Lord!"

"Do not blaspheme. The time will come when you will meet Him."

"When?"

"When your hour strikes."

The old man looked thoughtful. Then he took

his watch from his pocket, wound it up, listened to the ticking and said:

"My hour has struck already. . . . Now you go home, Martin; your wife and daughter and your church are waiting for you. Go and enjoy yourself, look after your services, drink your hock, and leave me alone. I am waiting for the collapse of the whole world, and I shall perish with it. I have no need of friends, and still less of a pastor. Your frightened face bores me."

"Gottlieb, be calm! Pray!"

"Go to the devil!"

Adler jumped up, slipped through the garden gate and ran into the fields. The pastor did not know what to do. He returned to the villa, feeling that Adler ought to be watched; but the servants were afraid of their master. He sent for the old book-keeper, and told him he feared the mill-owner had gone out of his mind and run away.

"Oh, that doesn't mean anything," said the book-keeper; "he will tire himself out and come back in a better frame of mind. He often does that when he is upset."

The hours passed and evening came, but the old cotton-spinner did not appear. Never had there been anything like the present excitement in the factory. Gosławski's death had shaken them, brought home to them the wrongs they were suffering, and set them against their merciless

employer. But now their feelings were of a different kind.

The first impression that Ferdinand's sudden death made upon the mill hands was dismay and fright. They felt as if a thunderbolt had struck the factory and it were trembling in its foundations, as if the sun had stood still in the sky. Ferdinand dead? He—so young and strong, a man who had never had to work, never attended to a machine—the son of their almighty employer? Quicker than a miserable workman like Gosławski, he had perished, shot like a hare! To these poor, simple, dependent people Adler was a severe deity, and more powerful than the State. They were seized with fear. It seemed to them that this small landowner and country judge, Zapora, had committed a sacrilege in shooting Ferdinand. How dared he shoot him, before whom even the boldest of them had to give way?

And a strange thing happened. These same people who had daily cursed the mill-owner and his son now cursed his destroyer. Some of them shouted that this fiend ought to be shot like a dog. But had the "fiend" suddenly appeared in their midst, they would certainly have run away.

As the discussions went on, some of the foremen explained that Zapora had not murdered Ferdinand, but that there had been a fight, and Ferdinand had been the first to shoot. It even transpired that the cause had been a quarrel about

the workpeople—that Ferdinand had been killed because he spent the money which had been got by wronging the people. God had punished Adler; their curses had been heard.

Thus within a few hours a legend was formed round the incident. The voice of human blood had gone up to the throne of the Almighty, and a miracle had been worked. They were filled with awe.

What would happen now? Would their employer cease to wrong them? Someone suggested that the machinery should be stopped under these unusual circumstances, but the old book-keeper fell upon him. Stop the machinery and irritate the boss even more, when he is not quite in his right mind? He himself had felt quite odd when the machinery had been stopped before, and they had all gone up to the house. When there is the clatter it makes one feel easier, and one thinks nothing has happened.

The others agreed.

In the evening Adler returned, and entered the office like a ghost. Nobody knew when he had come. He was covered with mud, as if he had been rolling on the ground. His eyes were bloodshot, and his short flaxen hair stood on end: he was gasping for breath. Hurriedly he ran through the offices, snapping his fingers. The frightened clerks pretended to go on with their work. A young man was reading a wire. Adler went up

to him, and asked in a quiet though changed voice:

"What is that?"

"Cotton is still going up," the clerk replied. "To-day we have made six thousand——"

He did not finish. Adler had torn the message from his hands and thrown it in his face.

"You low vermin!" he shouted. "How dare you tell me such a thing! The very dogs run away from my grief with their tails between their legs, and you talk to me of six thousand roubles! . . . Can you bring back a day—even half a day—to me?"

Boehme came running into the office.

"Gottlieb," he cried, "the carriage is waiting; come to my house with me."

The mill-owner drew himself up to his full height and put both his hands in his pockets.

"Oh, you are there, St. Martin!" he said ironically. "No, I will not go with you to your house! I will say even more. Not a single farthing shall I leave to you or your Józio! Do you hear? I dare say you are a servant of the Lord, and His wisdom speaks through your tongue, but not a farthing will you get from me. My fortune belongs to my son."

"What are you talking about, Gottlieb?" the pastor said, shocked.

"I am talking plainly. This is a plot to put your son in here to order the factory people

about. . . . You have killed my son, and you would like to kill me; but I am not one of those fools who want to spend their money on the salvation of their souls. . . ."

"Gottlieb, you suspect me—*me?*"

Adler seized his hands and looked into his eyes with hatred.

"Do you remember, Boehme, that you threatened me with God's punishment? Formerly the Jesuits used to do the same to trick people's fortune out of them. But I was too clever! . . . I would not be tricked; therefore God has punished me. It is not long ago since you threw corks and sticks on the water, and said the wave would return. But my poor son will not return."

Adler had never been so eloquent as at the moment when his reason was leaving him. He seized the pastor by the shoulders and pushed him out of the door. Restlessly he began to walk up and down again, and at last left the office. The gloom of dusk swallowed him up, and the noise of the machinery drowned his footfalls.

The clerks were panic-stricken. No one thought of watching him—they had all lost their heads. They knew how to attend mechanically to their duties, but no one would have dared to take any responsibility.

Pastor Boehme dared not give orders either. To whom should he have given them? Who would have listened to him?

Events meanwhile took their course. One of the workmen noticed that the small door leading to the cotton warehouse was open. Before he could give notice to the foreman, it had been shut again. The workpeople whispered to one another about thieves and Ferdinand's repentant ghost. But the clerks rushed to the office to see what had become of the master-key, and found it gone.

No doubt Adler himself had taken it. But where was he? The porter had seen him pass through the gateway, but had not noticed him go out again, though he said he had been watching closely for him. Who would undertake to find him in the huge building?

This time the old book-keeper guessed the danger which threatened the factory. He called up the foremen, ordered that watchmen should be set outside the main doors, that the engines should be stopped and the hands withdrawn from the workshop. But before these orders could be carried out the sound of the alarm bell was heard from the warehouses. Smoke and flames were issuing from the openings. The hands, already demoralized, were seized with panic and left the workrooms in a crowd. So precipitate was their flight that they forgot to turn out the lights, left all the doors open, and did not stop the engines. But they had only just saved themselves when the fire began to break out in the warehouses containing the manufactured goods.

"What is this? Someone is setting fire to the mill!" they cried.

"It is the boss himself! He is setting fire to it!"

"Where is he?"

"Nobody knows."

The fire was breaking out in the spinning and weaving departments.

"Surely it is Adler himself who is setting the mill alight!"

"Why should we save it, when he is destroying it?"

"Who tells you to save it?"

"But what are we going to eat to-morrow?"

The shouts of men and the weeping of women and children rose from the dense crowd of hundreds of human beings, powerless in the face of this calamity. Rescue was, indeed, impossible. The people looked on stupefied while the fire spread rapidly.

The gloomy background of a dark autumn night threw into relief the burning buildings, lit by fierce, red flames, which burst from all the openings like torches and played over the crowd gathered in the courtyard below. Of the main building in the shape of a horseshoe, the left wing was on fire in the fourth story, and the right on the ground floor. The workrooms in the middle part of the building were brightly lighted by gas-lamps, so that the power-looms could be

seen moving quickly to and fro. The walls of the warehouses had almost disappeared behind a thick veil of smoke and flames. Now the roof of the left wing was ablaze; on the right the fire had reached the first floor, and the flames were bursting from the windows. A continuous murmur, scarcely human, rose from the crowd below.

Suddenly it stopped. All eyes were turned towards the middle building, which was still untouched. On the second floor the shadow of a man was moving backwards and forwards among the looms. Wherever it stopped the room became lighter. The yarn, the wooden frames of the looms, the floors soaked with grease, caught fire with incredible rapidity. Within a few minutes the second floor was alight, and the shadow moved to the third floor, disappeared, and was seen again on the fourth.

"Look! It is he!" A shout burst from the terrified crowd.

Window-panes were blown out, and the glass fell clinking on to the pavement; floors collapsed under the heavy machinery. In the midst of the hellish noise, the rain of sparks and the clouds of smoke, the shadow of the man on the fourth floor was moving about like an inspector watching workmen. Sometimes it stopped at one of the many windows, and seemed to look out towards the house and the people.

The roof of the left wing broke down with a

terrific crash. Sheaves of sparks rose to the sky. Two stories of the cotton warehouse fell in. The air became unbearably hot. Some of the machines began to move with a grinding noise, and finally rolled over. The big wheel of the power-engine, encountering no more resistance, turned with a crazy rapidity, uttering a weird kind of howl. Walls collapsed; the chimney fell, and bits of masonry rolled towards the receding crowd.

From the direction of the gasometer came the dull sound of an explosion. The gas went out; the middle part of the building was fully ablaze; the fire reigned supreme.

Prosperous and full of life an hour ago, the mill was now a raging furnace, in which its owner sought and found his grave. . . .

The wave had returned. . . .

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